

Public Document Pack
Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments
Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 17th March, 2025 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - R Crouch, D Enright, J Aitman, D Edwards-Hughes, D Newcombe, J Robertshaw, R Smith and O Collins (and all other Town Councillors for information).

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

Admission to Meetings

All Council meetings are open to the public and press unless otherwise stated.

Numbers of the public will be limited, with priority given to those who have registered to speak on an item on the agenda. Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting should contact the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk in advance.

Recording of Meetings

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the council's public meetings may be recorded, which includes filming, audio-recording as well as photography.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings, please let the Deputy Town Clerk or Committee Clerk know before the start of the meeting.

Agenda

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee Members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk **prior to the meeting**, stating the reason for absence.

Standing Order 30(d)(v) permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have confirmed to the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any of the items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's code of conduct.

3. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 7)

a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Minutes held on 21 January 2025 ;

b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress any item).

4. **Public Participation**

The meeting will adjourn for this item

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of **five minutes** each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 42. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

5. **Finance Report** (Pages 8 - 23)

To receive and consider the report of the R.F.O concerning the financial position of items under the remit of this Committee in 2024/25 and the upcoming 2025/26 period.

Public Halls

6. **Public Halls Report** (Pages 24 - 28)

To receive and consider the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

7. **Corn Exchange Business Report** (Pages 29 - 34)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Venue & Events Officer.

8. **Public Halls Business Plan Review** (Pages 35 - 58)

To receive and consider the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

Cemeteries & Closed Churchyards

9. **Cemetery & Burial Regulations Review** (Pages 59 - 77)

To receive and consider the report of the Operations Manager and updated Cemetery Regulations.

10. **Closed Churchyards Update** (Pages 78 - 79)

To receive the report of the Operations Manager.

11. **Friends of the Cemeteries** (Pages 80 - 82)

To receive the notes from the meeting between Officers and the Friends of the Cemeteries held on 5 March 2025.

Allotments

12. **Allotment Site Provision** (Pages 83 - 85)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

13. **Witney Allotment Association**

To receive a report back from the WAA AGM held on 16 March 2025.

14. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

To consider and if appropriate, to pass the following resolution:

That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.



Town Clerk

Agenda Item 3

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 20 January 2025

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright	J Robertshaw
	J Aitman	R Smith
	D Edwards-Hughes	G Meadows (In place of O Collins)
	D Newcombe	
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Tomas Smith	Venue & Events Officer
Others:	None	

H26 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor O Collins, Councillor G Meadows attended as a substitute.

H27 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors R Smith & G Meadows declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 by virtue of knowing the filmmaker requesting free use of the Corn Exchange.

Councillor D Edwards-Hughes declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 12 by virtue of the CEO of the ICE centre being known to him as a fellow member of the West Oxfordshire Conservatives Association.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers

H28 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 11 November 2024 were received.

H625 & H632 – Members were updated that the proposed Witney Allotment Association AGM had yet to take place and that the Town Clerk/CEO and Chair would be meeting with a WAA Committee Member to try and progress.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 11 November 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair.

H29 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

H30 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the Committee.

The Chair highlighted the net cost figures of running Café 1863 as outlined in the report. These were lower than those that had been reported by contributors via social media so he expressed the importance of ensuring residents were in receipt of accurate information.

Members were unanimous in agreement to approve the report and the management accounts of the Committee's services to 30 November 2024.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Committee be approved.

H31 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Venue & Events Officer which provided updates on the improvements to Conferencing equipment, Website layout and the installations of notice boards and other promotional materials.

Members also considered the request for a subsidised hire of the Main Hall from a local young film director, the Committee heard of the costs to staff the bar however they believed bar sales would compensate those additional costs. Members were therefore unanimous in agreement to support the request.

Additionally, the Committee discussed the recommendation to restrict the use of the Corn Exchange kitchen to only Town Council staff. Members were considerate to the need for users to have an area to prepare light refreshments however, the Kitchen was not a suitable location due to the need to ensure that hygiene and safe working practices were maintained. All Members were in agreement.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a subsidised let of the Corn Exchange be granted for the showing of Los Banditos of Ducklington Lake at a cost of £160 and,
3. That, third parties be excluded from using the Corn Exchange kitchen area so that Hygiene and safe working practices could be maintained, and this be communicated to all users.

(Cllr D Enright arrived at 6:20pm)

H32 **CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Venue & Events Officer concerning recent and upcoming events in the public halls.

Members were pleased to see the detailed illustrations of target attendance against actual attendance, as well as the report that another wedding and panto had been successfully held along with a show featuring solely young performers.

The Committee welcomed the proposals of a Folk event and the idea of the introduction of a variety event to better service the mix of performers that attend the regular open mic events.

The hall usage figures were reviewed and though Members found it useful to see year on year comparisons, it was requested that these be summarised in future and presented as part of the Officers report rather than as a statistical table.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a halls usage summary be included in future reports.

H33 **PUBLIC HALLS BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW**

The Venue & Events Officer advised this was a working document however, the item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee to allow him further time to prepare the review for presentation.

H34 **CEMETERY REGULATIONS**

The Committee Clerk advised this item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee to allow the Operations Manager to fully complete the revised regulations and allow Members sufficient time to review it due to the complexity of the document.

A Member asked that the Friends of the Cemeteries be advised of the changes to which the Committee Clerk confirmed that a request had been sent to make the necessary arrangements which he would follow up.

Resolved:

That, a meeting between Officers and Friends of the Cemeteries be arranged.

H35 **BURIAL FEES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager.

A verbal update was provided by the Committee Clerk to correct detail within the report. The cost of Exclusive Right of Burial had previously been agreed at 15% at the meeting of Policy, Governance & Finance on 25 November 2024 (Minute F660 Refers).

Members questions were answered, and they were reassured as to the reasons for the need for these increases, clarity was also provided to the monetary cost of interment and EROB

purchases. All members were in agreement with the following prices which would become effective from 1 April 2025.

Interments (Prices including 6.3% Increase)

Baby in baby plot	£286.50
Under 18 yrs if using Child Size grave double depth	£424.00
Under 18 yrs Second burial in existing double depth Child Size grave	£267.50
Double depth grave Adult Size grave	£841.50
Second burial in existing double depth grave Adult Size grave	£535.00
Interment of ashes for person	£186.50
Burial in single depth grave at Tower Hill Cemetery	£619.00

EROB (Prices Including 15% Increase)

Exclusive right of burial for a baby	£251.00
Exclusive right of burial for child under 18 years of age	£370.00
Exclusive right of burial for person over age of 18 years	£741.00
Exclusive right of burial for family ashes plot (Tower Hill)	£486.00
Exclusive right of burial for ashes plots	£269.00

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, interment charges are increased by 6.3% and,
3. That, the cost of purchasing the Exclusive Right of Burial rises by 15%.

H36 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved:

That in accordance with section (1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

H37 **PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS**

The Committee received a confidential verbal update from the Town Clerk/CEO in relation to one of its property assets, Langdale Hall, following advice from its professional advisors.

Members heard that repairs to the Langdale Hall roof had commenced, and Officers would continue to review in order to further future proof the building.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential update be noted and,
2. That, Officers proceed with a review of the lease.

The meeting closed at: 6.59 pm

Chair

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Finance Report
Meeting Date: 17 March 2025
Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 12 noon on Friday 14 March to allow for a full response at the meeting.

Background

Detailed income and expenditure statements for budgets which are the responsibility of this committee are enclosed. The period to which this report relates is 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025.

Current Situation

A Management accounts

The Council has appointed five standing committees which have delegated powers to make decisions, including financial decisions, regarding the services which are included within their terms of reference, subject to the committee having the necessary budget. The Council's coding system and management accounts reflect the committee structure.

Within each committee, there are individual **cost centres**, comprising three digits, typically representing a discrete service entity, to which income and expenditure is allocated against previously agreed revenue budgets.

The cost centres for which this committee has **responsibility** are:

agreed revenue budgets.

Cost centre	Service
102	Langdale Hall
103	Bars
104	Corn Exchange
105	Burwell Hall
106	Madley Park Community Centre
301	Tower Hill Cemetery
302	Windrush Cemetery
303	Closed churchyards – St Mary's/ Holy Trinity
305	Allotments

Within each cost centre income and expenditure is then allocated to a four-digit nominal ledger code; these codes are common across the cost centres. Nominal ledger codes further define the costs associated with the cost centre and correspond to a specific type of account, such as materials or staffing costs. Codes commencing with “1” are income codes; codes commencing with “3” or “4” are expenditure codes.

The format of this report is as follows:

- (i) Last year 2023-24 - the first two columns relate to the original budget from 2023-24 against the actual figures for last year.
- (ii) Current year 2023-24. (a) Brought forward – sums brought forward from last year against specific codes. (b) Net virement – this represents in year transfers between budget lines. (c) Agreed budget – estimate agreed by the Council in January 2024. (d) EMR – budgeted use of earmarked reserves. (e) Total – this is the total amount approved in the current year budget, the total of columns (a) to (e) inclusive. (f) Actual year to date spend.
- (iii) Next year 2025-26. The three columns show, respectively, the agreed budget to be funded from precept, the contribution to or from earmarked reserves and any sums which are budgeted to be carried forward.

The Omega financial programme has a number of different report formats and this is the first time that I have chosen to present this one to this Committee. This format has been chosen because it shows much more clearly the use of earmarked reserves by including columns showing the earmarked reserve movements. The downside is that this report format does not show the revised 2024-25 estimates agreed in January 2025 and for these I would refer Members to the report submitted to the meeting of 6 January 2025.

A full review of the budgetary position was undertaken during the budget cycle. Most areas of interest were raised at the last meeting of this committee and the subsequent Policy Governance and Finance Committee and full Council meetings. The RFO would refer members to the finance/ budget reports which were approved at those meetings for further details.

However there are a number of points it is worth emphasizing:

1. Current year budget: In terms of the report presented at this meeting, the current year (2024/25) budget is that originally agreed in January 2024 ahead of the 2024/25 year – see comments above.
2. The actual year to date figures are for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025, subject to the comments in relation to recharges of overheads (point 3, below).
3. The treatment of overheads was previously reported to Members. Central support overheads (nominal ledger codes 4892 and 4893) have been allocated in the current

year to 31 January 2025. Works overheads (nominal ledger codes 4888, 4890 and 4899) have been allocated in the current year to 30 September 2024.

During the final stage of the budget process all central support and works overheads were removed from the service cost centres in relation to the revised 2024/25 estimates and the 2025/26 estimates . There was no impact on the Council's overall budget. I have now transferred these overheads back to the individual cost centres based on updated estimates of staff time allocations. Again, there is no impact on the bottom line – as the transfers are agreed the net cost of the cost centres 601,602 and 604 are reduced by the same amount as the increases to the service cost centres.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no implications directly resulting from this report.
- b) Biodiversity - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - no implications directly resulting from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The provision of regular financial reports is part of the Council's risk management system.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Social value is not quantified in the financial reports but clearly the creation of social value is dependent on setting adequate budgets to meet the Council's objectives.

Financial implications

This report forms part of the Council's due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. The financial implications are detailed above and also in the attached appendices.

This report forms part of the Council's mechanisms for budgetary control, as it enables income and expenditure incurred to be reviewed and to be compared with the Council's budgets.

Recommendations

Members are invited to approve the report and the management accounts of the Committee's services to 31 January 2025.

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
<u>Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments</u>												
<u>102</u>	<u>LANGDALE HALL</u>											
1050	RENT RECEIVED	20,302	20,677	0	0	26,007	0	26,007	19,485	25,979	0	0
1052	EXPENSES RECOVERED	200	205	0	0	171	0	171	91	370	0	0
1060	INSURANCE RECOVERED	650	728	0	0	764	0	764	0	950	0	0
	Total Income	21,152	21,610	0	0	26,942	0	26,942	19,575	27,299	0	0
4021	TELEPHONE/FAX	200	230	0	0	171	0	171	244	310	0	0
4025	INSURANCE	750	818	0	0	928	0	928	765	950	0	0
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	1,000	1,345	0	0	1,000	2,000	3,000	679	1,000	0	0
4038	OTHER MAINTENANCE	1,000	340	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4048	ENG.INSPEC.(VARIABLE)	450	345	0	0	368	0	368	575	585	0	0
4059	OTHER PROF FEES	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	1,039	0	1,039	997	2,100	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	95	0	95	67	137	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	4,492	4,105	0	0	4,607	0	4,607	3,716	5,311	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	1,294	1,622	0	0	1,304	0	1,304	1,258	1,410	0	0
4896	MTCE STAFF RECHARGE	1,057	542	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4897	MTCE O'HEAD RECHARGE	103	63	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	110	188	0	0	189	0	189	244	299	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	11,456	9,597	0	0	11,701	2,000	13,701	8,544	14,102	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	9,696	12,012			15,241		13,241	11,031	13,197		
<u>103</u>	<u>BAR/ CAFE</u>											

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
1000	C/EX. 1863 - SALES ALCOHOL	22,500	37,255	0	0	34,736	0	34,736	24,207	37,500	0	0
1001	C/EX. 1863 SALES - FOOD	20,000	27,405	0	0	28,660	0	28,660	30,212	35,700	0	0
1002	C/EX. 1863 BAR HIRE CHARGE	750	1,067	0	0	1,430	0	1,430	783	1,055	0	0
1003	C/EX. 1863 SALES - SOFT DRINKS	0	7,537	0	0	7,064	0	7,064	7,953	9,030	0	0
1009	CORN EX.1863 CAFE- HOT DRINKS	39,000	70,391	0	0	74,800	0	74,800	81,995	96,000	0	0
1090	BURWELL HALL BAR - ALCOHOL	6,000	3,819	0	0	6,600	0	6,600	1,413	3,200	0	0
1091	BURWELL HALL BAR HIRE CHARGE	150	0	0	0	150	0	150	-100	153	0	0
Total Income		88,400	147,473	0	0	153,440	0	153,440	146,463	182,638	0	0
3000	BAR PURCHASES - DRINK	11,500	22,782	0	0	21,000	0	21,000	18,349	22,875	0	0
3001	BAR PURCHASES - FOOD	10,000	18,970	0	0	17,196	0	17,196	18,157	21,420	0	0
3009	CAFE PURCHASES - HOT BEVERAGES	14,000	17,750	0	0	19,448	0	19,448	20,202	24,000	0	0
3010	PROMOTIONS	0	1,013	0	0	0	0	0	2,599	4,450	0	0
Direct Expenditure		35,500	60,516	0	0	57,644	0	57,644	59,307	72,745	0	0
4001	SALARIES	66,953	113,788	0	0	105,307	0	105,307	96,567	107,000	0	0
4002	ER'S NIC	7,356	5,406	0	0	4,566	0	4,566	5,729	9,900	0	0
4003	ER'S SUPERANN	3,459	5,761	0	0	5,124	0	5,124	5,503	7,000	0	0
4007	PROTECTIVE CLOTHING	750	180	0	0	750	0	750	21	500	0	0
4016	CLEANING MATERIALS	300	66	0	0	100	0	100	68	100	0	0
4038	OTHER MAINTENANCE	750	495	0	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	0
4042	EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	5,000	6,440	0	0	5,000	0	5,000	5,457	5,000	0	0
4059	OTHER PROF FEES	700	600	0	0	700	0	700	600	700	0	0
4099	MISCELLANEOUS	1,000	973	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	297	1,000	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	11,229	5,155	0	0	4,608	0	4,608	5,838	5,339	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	3,235	1,798	0	0	1,304	0	1,304	1,321	1,410	0	0
4896	MTCE STAFF RECHARGE	0	436	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overhead Expenditure		100,732	141,099	0	0	128,959	0	128,959	121,401	138,449	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		<u>(47,832)</u>	<u>(54,143)</u>			<u>(33,163)</u>		<u>(33,163)</u>	<u>(34,245)</u>	<u>(28,556)</u>		
104	<u>CORN EXCHANGE</u>											
1007	CORN EXCHNGE LETTING	38,500	62,539	0	0	57,314	0	57,314	54,016	68,000	0	0
1014	EVENTS INCOME	4,000	12,817	0	0	13,609	0	13,609	6,484	13,881	0	0
1015	TEA DANCE INCOME	1,500	2,114	0	0	2,400	0	2,400	2,011	2,400	0	0
1017	CORN EXCHANGE WEDDING LETTING	500	859	0	0	1,353	0	1,353	958	1,400	0	0
1052	EXPENSES RECOVERED	0	2,070	0	0	3,479	0	3,479	0	750	0	0
Total Income		44,500	80,399	0	0	78,155	0	78,155	63,469	86,431	0	0
4001	SALARIES	61,962	53,136	0	0	78,384	0	78,384	60,950	65,544	0	0
4002	ER'S NIC	4,395	4,267	0	0	5,927	0	5,927	5,293	7,342	0	0
4003	ER'S SUPERANN	9,387	10,140	0	0	12,971	0	12,971	9,943	9,811	0	0
4007	PROTECTIVE CLOTHING	300	285	0	0	300	0	300	154	300	0	0
4008	TRAINING	1,000	993	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	3,362	1,020	0	0
4011	RATES	4,500	1,166	0	0	1,244	0	1,244	1,282	3,167	0	0
4012	WATER RATES	1,100	3,231	0	0	2,700	0	2,700	4,106	5,075	0	0
4014	ELECTRICITY	36,000	20,219	0	0	16,792	0	16,792	10,345	12,000	0	0
4015	GAS	26,250	14,495	0	0	8,987	0	8,987	5,854	8,000	0	0
4016	CLEANING MATERIALS	3,000	1,804	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	2,350	2,040	0	0
4017	CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	3,500	3,280	0	0	3,735	0	3,735	545	3,735	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4018	PHOTOCOPIER COSTS	50	71	0	0	50	0	50	149	190	0	0
4021	TELEPHONE/FAX	900	1,487	0	0	960	0	960	1,436	1,260	0	0
4025	INSURANCE	850	937	0	0	1,126	0	1,126	930	950	0	0
4028	I.T.	1,400	2,384	0	0	1,400	0	1,400	1,549	1,500	0	0
4030	RECRUITMENT ADVT'G	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4032	PUBLICITY	3,000	1,995	0	0	3,000	0	3,000	961	3,000	0	0
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	8,000	11,496	0	0	8,000	0	8,000	9,352	12,000	0	0
4038	OTHER MAINTENANCE	4,000	12,194	0	0	4,000	0	4,000	5,043	4,000	0	0
4042	EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	2,000	1,818	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	1,910	2,000	0	0
4043	SMALL TOOLS & EQUIPT	150	181	0	0	150	0	150	26	150	0	0
4045	LICENCES	4,000	2,208	0	0	2,500	0	2,500	2,099	2,900	0	0
4048	ENG.INSPEC.(VATABLE)	350	337	0	0	373	0	373	364	370	0	0
4064	HEALTH & SAFETY	100	288	0	0	100	0	100	408	100	0	0
4141	EVENTS	10,000	13,825	0	0	10,000	0	10,000	8,484	10,000	0	0
4142	TEA DANCE COSTS	6,000	5,145	0	0	6,535	0	6,535	4,680	6,700	0	0
4144	FILM CLUB	0	6,150	0	0	4,481	0	4,481	3,159	4,600	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	3,856	0	3,856	2,309	5,000	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	354	0	354	184	326	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	22,459	10,311	0	0	9,215	0	9,215	11,680	10,677	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	6,470	3,597	0	0	2,607	0	2,607	2,520	2,820	0	0
4896	MTCE STAFF RECHARGE	3,922	2,371	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4897	MTCE O'HEAD RECHARGE	384	274	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	410	900	0	0	703	0	703	701	711	0	0
Overhead Expenditure		226,839	190,984	0	0	196,450	0	196,450	162,128	188,288	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
104 Net Income over Expenditure		-182,339	-110,585	0	0	-118,295	0	-118,295	-98,659	-101,857	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	10,632	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		<u>(182,339)</u>	<u>(99,954)</u>			<u>(118,295)</u>		<u>(118,295)</u>	<u>(98,659)</u>	<u>(101,857)</u>		
105	<u>BURWELL HALL</u>											
1005	BURWELL HALL LETTING	22,500	26,421	0	0	30,575	0	30,575	23,901	31,200	0	0
1052	EXPENSES RECOVERED	0	1,072	0	0	2,189	0	2,189	0	750	0	0
Total Income		<u>22,500</u>	<u>27,492</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>32,764</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>32,764</u>	<u>23,901</u>	<u>31,950</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
4001	SALARIES	41,308	44,900	0	0	52,256	0	52,256	48,723	46,804	0	0
4002	ER'S NIC	2,930	3,574	0	0	3,951	0	3,951	4,312	4,925	0	0
4003	ER'S SUPERANN	6,258	7,519	0	0	8,647	0	8,647	7,380	5,744	0	0
4007	PROTECTIVE CLOTHING	300	7	0	0	300	0	300	0	300	0	0
4008	TRAINING	500	0	0	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	0
4011	RATES	3,000	786	0	0	839	0	839	865	2,150	0	0
4012	WATER RATES	1,200	371	0	0	420	0	420	859	825	0	0
4014	ELECTRICITY	11,920	3,401	0	0	3,362	0	3,362	2,053	2,500	0	0
4015	GAS	15,000	7,088	0	0	8,567	0	8,567	1,478	4,146	0	0
4016	CLEANING MATERIALS	2,000	1,839	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	1,908	2,050	0	0
4017	CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	2,200	1,980	0	0	1,225	0	1,225	2,558	2,800	0	0
4021	TELEPHONE/FAX	300	235	0	0	268	0	268	191	260	0	0
4025	INSURANCE	550	585	0	0	592	0	592	437	445	0	0
4028	I.T.	1,000	900	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	1,249	1,000	0	0
4032	PUBLICITY	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	330	1,000	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	5,000	5,995	0	0	5,000	0	5,000	4,426	5,000	0	0
4038	OTHER MAINTENANCE	2,100	1,696	0	0	2,100	0	2,100	348	1,825	0	0
4042	EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	1,500	300	0	0	1,500	0	1,500	253	1,500	0	0
4045	LICENCES	750	447	0	0	477	0	477	475	485	0	0
4048	ENG.INSPEC.(VARIABLE)	325	319	0	0	340	0	340	1,790	1,825	0	0
4064	HEALTH & SAFETY	0	74	0	0	0	0	0	333	0	0	0
4099	MISCELLANEOUS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	54	200	0	0
4142	TEA DANCE COSTS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	113	0	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	19,324	0	19,324	1,550	5,000	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	1,773	0	1,773	118	326	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	4,492	4,105	0	0	4,608	0	4,608	3,716	5,339	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	1,294	1,622	0	0	1,304	0	1,304	1,258	1,410	0	0
4894	GROUNDS STAFF RECHARGE	0	122	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4895	GROUNDS O'HEAD RECHARGE	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4896	MTCE STAFF RECHARGE	19,654	13,425	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4897	MTCE O'HEAD RECHARGE	1,924	1,360	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	2,054	4,380	0	0	3,524	0	3,524	395	711	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	128,559	107,068	0	0	124,877	0	124,877	87,173	99,070	0	0
	105 Net Income over Expenditure	-106,059	-79,576	0	0	-92,113	0	-92,113	-63,273	-67,120	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,940	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(106,059)	(79,576)			(92,113)		(92,113)	(61,333)	(67,120)		
106	<u>MADLEY PARK COMMUNITY CENTRE</u>											
1052	EXPENSES RECOVERED	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,204	0	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
1060	INSURANCE RECOVERED	440	494	0	0	526	0	526	0	530	0	0
	Total Income	440	494	0	0	526	0	526	1,204	530	0	0
4025	INSURANCE	440	494	0	0	526	0	526	519	530	0	0
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,617	0	0	0
4038	OTHER MAINTENANCE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,856	0	0	0
4048	ENG.INSPEC.(VATABLE)	700	0	0	0	747	0	747	0	760	0	0
4059	OTHER PROF FEES	1,500	0	0	0	1,500	0	1,500	0	1,500	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	15	0	15	0	533	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	35	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	898	821	0	0	921	0	921	740	1,067	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	259	324	0	0	261	0	261	189	282	0	0
4896	MTCE STAFF RECHARGE	15	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4897	MTCE O'HEAD RECHARGE	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	2	3	0	0	3	0	3	0	76	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	3,815	1,654	0	0	3,975	0	3,975	10,921	4,784	0	0
	106 Net Income over Expenditure	-3,375	-1,160	0	0	-3,449	0	-3,449	-9,717	-4,254	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,617	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(3,375)</u>	<u>(1,160)</u>			<u>(3,449)</u>		<u>(3,449)</u>	<u>(2,100)</u>	<u>(4,254)</u>		
301	<u>TOWER HILL CEMETERY</u>											
1050	RENT RECEIVED	13,620	13,620	0	0	13,260	0	13,260	13,620	13,620	0	0
1060	INSURANCE RECOVERED	225	249	0	0	194	0	194	0	200	0	0
1099	MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	0	850	0	0	0	0	0	153	0	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
1100	BURIAL FEES	4,000	7,627	0	0	9,283	0	9,283	6,954	8,850	0	0
1101	GRANT OF RIGHTS	1,000	1,387	0	0	2,828	0	2,828	805	1,200	0	0
1102	INTERMENT OF ASHES	9,000	10,754	0	0	12,324	0	12,324	15,491	13,000	0	0
1105	MEMORIAL FEES	3,500	5,285	0	0	5,692	0	5,692	5,217	6,500	0	0
1106	MEMORIAL PLAQUES	330	165	0	0	323	0	323	512	500	0	0
1108	CHAPEL FEES	214	363	0	0	384	0	384	508	450	0	0
Total Income		31,889	40,299	0	0	44,288	0	44,288	43,258	44,320	0	0
4001	SALARIES	12,541	11,496	0	0	14,639	0	14,639	12,184	15,602	0	0
4002	ER'S NIC	1,103	1,002	0	0	1,193	0	1,193	1,089	1,915	0	0
4003	ER'S SUPERANN	2,722	2,521	0	0	3,177	0	3,177	2,644	3,385	0	0
4011	RATES	4,250	3,792	0	0	4,046	0	4,046	3,792	3,850	0	0
4012	WATER RATES	250	540	0	0	365	0	365	1,164	850	0	0
4014	ELECTRICITY	1,000	1,160	0	0	1,118	0	1,118	727	900	0	0
4016	CLEANING MATERIALS	30	0	0	0	30	0	30	0	30	0	0
4017	CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	1,000	1,350	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	1,325	1,500	0	0
4025	INSURANCE	225	249	0	0	435	0	435	0	445	0	0
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	6,000	500	0	0	6,000	0	6,000	2,210	6,000	0	0
4038	OTHER MAINTENANCE	0	67	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4041	EQUIPMENT HIRE	0	125	0	0	0	0	0	0	400	0	0
4042	EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	100	735	0	0	100	0	100	178	100	0	0
4059	OTHER PROF FEES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0
4064	HEALTH & SAFETY	100	0	0	0	100	0	100	0	102	0	0
4099	MISCELLANEOUS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	195	200	0	0
4110	SUBSIDIZED LETTINGS	200	0	0	0	200	0	200	0	200	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4350	PLAQUES PURCHASED	300	263	0	0	291	0	291	268	605	0	0
4355	MEMORIAL MAINTENANCE	2,500	905	0	0	2,500	0	2,500	980	2,000	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	80,770	0	80,770	44,178	110,000	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	10,846	0	10,846	3,598	7,164	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	13,475	12,316	0	0	13,823	0	13,823	11,149	16,017	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	3,882	4,867	0	0	3,911	0	3,911	3,777	4,230	0	0
4894	GROUNDS STAFF RECHARGE	8,416	3,495	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4895	GROUNDS O'HEAD RECHARGE	3,108	3,439	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4896	MTCE STAFF RECHARGE	73,017	63,818	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4897	MTCE O'HEAD RECHARGE	7,146	6,405	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	7,630	13,070	0	0	13,092	0	13,092	12,909	15,643	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	148,995	132,116	0	0	157,636	0	157,636	102,367	191,238	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(117,106)	(91,817)			(113,348)		(113,348)	(59,110)	(146,918)		
302	<u>WINDRUSH CEMETERY</u>											
1100	BURIAL FEES	15,000	19,066	0	0	22,338	0	22,338	17,898	22,785	0	0
1101	GRANT OF RIGHTS	20,000	23,204	0	0	27,091	0	27,091	16,141	27,633	0	0
1102	INTERMENT OF ASHES	5,500	4,781	0	0	5,288	0	5,288	2,849	5,394	0	0
1105	MEMORIAL FEES	6,000	8,634	0	0	7,448	0	7,448	4,947	7,597	0	0
1106	MEMORIAL PLAQUES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	212	0	0	0
	Total Income	46,500	55,684	0	0	62,165	0	62,165	42,047	63,409	0	0
4001	SALARIES	12,541	11,496	0	0	14,639	0	14,639	12,184	14,932	0	0
4002	ER'S NIC	1,103	1,002	0	0	1,193	0	1,193	1,089	1,217	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4003	ER'S SUPERANN	2,721	2,521	0	0	3,177	0	3,177	2,644	3,241	0	0
4011	RATES	6,050	7,984	0	0	8,519	0	8,519	7,984	8,689	0	0
4012	WATER RATES	300	191	0	0	237	0	237	318	242	0	0
4014	ELECTRICITY	4,000	3,620	0	0	3,532	0	3,532	1,656	2,750	0	0
4016	CLEANING MATERIALS	30	0	0	0	30	0	30	0	31	0	0
4017	CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	1,000	952	0	0	777	0	777	1,157	793	0	0
4021	TELEPHONE/FAX	300	21	0	0	268	0	268	0	273	0	0
4025	INSURANCE	120	125	0	0	127	0	127	131	130	0	0
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	2,000	682	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	8,458	2,040	0	0
4037	GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	500	379	0	0	500	0	500	584	510	0	0
4038	OTHER MAINTENANCE	1,500	985	0	0	1,500	0	1,500	521	1,530	0	0
4042	EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	1,500	1,018	0	0	1,500	0	1,500	54	1,530	0	0
4059	OTHER PROF FEES	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,020	0	0
4064	HEALTH & SAFETY	100	0	0	0	100	0	100	0	102	0	0
4099	MISCELLANEOUS	0	850	0	0	0	0	0	216	0	0	0
4350	PLAQUES PURCHASED	500	0	0	0	100	0	100	68	102	0	0
4355	MEMORIAL MAINTENANCE	2,000	1,133	0	0	2,000	0	2,000	1,085	1,790	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	138,044	0	138,044	35,547	110,000	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	16,101	0	16,101	2,674	7,164	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	13,475	12,316	0	0	13,823	0	13,823	11,149	16,017	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	3,882	4,867	0	0	3,911	0	3,911	3,777	4,230	0	0
4894	GROUNDS STAFF RECHARGE	8,416	2,611	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4895	GROUNDS O'HEAD RECHARGE	3,108	1,631	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4896	MTCE STAFF RECHARGE	131,269	89,914	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4897	MTCE O'HEAD RECHARGE	12,848	9,641	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	13,718	23,375	0	0	23,539	0	23,539	10,995	15,643	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	223,981	177,313	0	0	236,617	0	236,617	102,292	193,976	0	0
	302 Net Income over Expenditure	-177,481	-121,629	0	0	-174,452	0	-174,452	-60,246	-130,567	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,215	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(177,481)	(121,629)			(174,452)		(174,452)	(54,030)	(130,567)		
303	<u>CLOSED CH'YARDS ST MARYS/HOLY</u>											
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	11,000	4,925	0	0	16,000	0	16,000	31,438	11,000	0	0
4040	ARBORICULTURE	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4059	OTHER PROF FEES	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	13,000	4,925	0	0	18,000	0	18,000	31,438	13,000	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31,060	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(13,000)	(4,925)			(18,000)		(18,000)	(378)	(13,000)		
305	<u>ALLOTMENTS</u>											
4013	RENT PAID	125	120	0	0	125	0	125	-125	125	0	0
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	500	5,000	0	0	500	0	500	775	1,600	0	0
4037	GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	500	0	0	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	0
4040	ARBORICULTURE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	900	0	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	1,168	0	1,168	2,331	5,500	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	0	0	0	0	107	0	107	193	358	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	3,369	3,078	0	0	3,456	0	3,456	2,792	4,004	0	0

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 10)

Note: Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - management accounts to 31 January 2025

		<u>Last Year 2023-24</u>		<u>Current Year 2024-25</u>						<u>Next Year 2025-26</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Brought Forward	Net Virement	Agreed	EMR	Total	Actual YTD	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	971	974	0	0	978	0	978	945	1,058	0	0
4896	MTCE STAFF RECHARGE	1,188	693	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4897	MTCE O'HEAD RECHARGE	116	72	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	124	213	0	0	213	0	213	912	782	0	0
Overhead Expenditure		6,893	10,149	0	0	7,047	0	7,047	8,723	13,927	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		(6,893)	(10,149)			(7,047)		(7,047)	(8,723)	(13,927)		
Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments - Income		255,381	373,451	0	0	398,280	0	398,280	339,916	436,577	0	0
Expenditure		899,770	835,423	0	0	942,906	2,000	944,906	694,295	929,579	0	0
Net Income over Expenditure		-644,389	-461,972	0	0	-544,626	-2,000	-546,626	-354,378	-493,002	0	0
plus Transfer from EMR		0	10,632	0	0	0	0	0	46,832	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		(644,389)	(451,340)			(544,626)		(546,626)	(307,546)	(493,002)		
Total Budget Income		255,381	373,451	0	0	398,280	0	398,280	339,916	436,577	0	0
Expenditure		899,770	835,423	0	0	942,906	2,000	944,906	694,295	929,579	0	0
Net Income over Expenditure		-644,389	-461,972	0	0	-544,626	-2,000	-546,626	-354,378	-493,002	0	0
plus Transfer from EMR		0	10,632	0	0	0	0	0	46,832	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve		(644,389)	(451,340)			(544,626)		(546,626)	(307,546)	(493,002)		

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Public Halls Report

Meeting Date: Monday 17th March 2025

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

Background

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the operation and management of the two public halls under the ownership and management of Witney Town Council. These facilities serve as vital community spaces for events, meetings, and public activities, providing an accessible environment for residents and local organizations. It is important that these halls are maintained to a high standard, both in terms of physical condition and service delivery, to ensure that they meet the needs of the local community and support the Town Council's strategic objectives.

The two public halls are in central areas of Witney, each offering unique spaces that cater to a range of events, from small community gatherings to larger functions. These venues have become integral to the town's social fabric, providing a space for everything from local meetings, educational programs, and cultural events to celebrations such as weddings and family gatherings.

In line with the Witney Town Council's commitment to creating vibrant, inclusive public spaces, the operation of these halls must align with council policies and ensure that they remain accessible, well-maintained, and effectively managed. As part of its overarching mission, the Town Council has set forth several guidelines regarding the management, booking, maintenance, and use of these halls to ensure they are operated in accordance with the highest standards of safety, accessibility, and community engagement.

Current Situation

Thames Valley Air Ambulance Clothes Recycling Bin

WTC have been contacted by Thames Valley Air Ambulance Charity (**TVAA**) to explore the possibility of having clothing recycling bin located at Burwell Hall. Officers have liaised with representatives from the charity and looked at the most feasible locations available to accommodate this.

TVAA work in partnership with Recycling Systems Northwest (**RS**) who are members of the Fundraising Regulator Scheme and the Textile Recycling Association.

The proposed location is to the right of the hall when approached from the carpark, on a patch of concrete which used to be the location of a Grundon Wheelie Bin which is no longer used.



RS have a contract with the **TVAA** to make a financial donation from the gross proceeds of the saleable donated items, and the vast majority of donated items will be recycled and not destroyed for ragging, extending the useable life of an item and reducing its carbon footprint.

The maintenance and cleanliness of the recycling bin would be looked after by **RS** as part of their agreement with **TVAA**, with initial collections running every two weeks, if this is not feasible, then this can be increased to every week or every day. There is a 24-hour, 7 day a week contact line which WTC can use to raise any issues, and these will be responded to and rectified within 24 hours.

This also works for the general cleanliness around the bin, with **RS** available to respond to any excess rubbish left by the bin which isn't clothing donations. This will ensure that the area remains tidy and that the area around the hall; remains tidy and appealing to people using the hall or the playing fields.

Due to the cause that the recycling bank is being used for and the lack of risk associated with having the bin in an area that was previously used for a bin, there are no real problems having the bin located at Burwell Hall from a halls management position.

If the Council want to proceed with supporting the clothes recycling bin, the lead time to get it installed would be 3 weeks, and if the Council wanted to get it removed, this can be arranged by giving 2 months' notice to **RS** in writing

Local Film & Media Student – Los Banditos of Ducklington Lake

The Venue & Events Officer has approached the creator of *Los Banditos* and requested a pre-screening to ensure that all content is suitable for a wider audience. A member of staff will view the suitability of the film at a pre-screening which will be held approximately 1 month before the premiere, which is confirmed for Friday, 13th June, and will be advertised in due course.

This exciting project, which the Council is proud to support, not only highlights the talent of young local creators but also serves as an opportunity to showcase the Corn Exchange as a

vibrant community venue. The event promises to bring attention to both the venue and the creative work being produced locally, offering a unique experience for the audience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyxCdkRrGIY> (Link to trailer.)

Corn Exchange Gallery Room Conferencing Equipment

The Gallery Room Conferencing System has been completed and a user guide written by Officers which will allow all groups to easily use the facilities for any scenario where it might be needed. The user guide has been trialled by WTC staff and will be attached to any booking looking to use the installed equipment.

Officers have identified that there are three main functions of the conferencing system,

- Using the projector and screen wirelessly – this allows hirers to connect remotely to the projector and display their device onto the projector screen. The downside to this is that sound will only be played through the projector speaker which isn't as clear as the Rally Bar.
- Using the projector and screen by hardwiring – this allows hirers to connect to the projector and screen and utilise the Rally bar (this works as a sound bar). This set up is ideal for those wanting to play video and utilise a better sound than the projector alone.
- Using the projector and screen for Microsoft Teams Hybrid Conferencing – This is the original purpose of the conferencing system being installed in the first place. Hirers can now book the room for any type of meeting that they need. The Rally bar incorporates an HD camera with microphone pods that connect to allow for professional set up. The user guide shows how to action this in an easy step by step fashion, with Officers intention to be on hand for the first bookings to make sure that all runs smoothly. The user guide will be added to if there are any updates that require explaining, and to any bookings using the equipment.

It is hoped that with careful marketing and advertising that the conferencing facilities will bring in new revenue streams and allow the Corn Exchange to attract different hirers than those currently using the hall.

Flags

Four new flags and flagpoles are currently being procured, with the intention of having them installed on the exterior of the Corn Exchange in April. The flagpoles will feature interchangeable flags, allowing for flexibility in promoting both the hall and any events being run by the council.

This addition aims to increase the visibility of the Corn Exchange, drawing attention to the venue and its upcoming activities while enhancing the building's aesthetic appeal. The new flags will serve as a dynamic, eye-catching tool for communicating with the public and encouraging greater community engagement with the events hosted at the Corn Exchange.

Internal Notice Board

A new notice board is expected to be installed shortly in the lobby of the Corn Exchange.

The notice board is finished in grey, carefully chosen to complement the existing aesthetic and décor of the Corn Exchange. This new addition will not only serve as an essential communication tool for displaying upcoming events, council policies, regulatory notices and community announcements but will also enhance the overall look and feel of the venue.

The design has been selected to ensure that it blends seamlessly with the historical character of the building while providing a functional, easily accessible space for keeping the public informed.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Providing a supportive environment for people to express themselves through creativity.
- b) Biodiversity – All matters relating to Biodiversity will be considered when making decisions for both halls – The recycling of clothing provides many benefits such as conserving water resources and minimizing waste and pollution, ultimately lessening the strain on natural habitats and ecosystems
- c) Crime & Disorder – The continued use of halls as a safe space
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Recycling of clothing also reduces the demand for new raw materials and energy and avoids the release of methane from decomposing textiles

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- 1. The **TVAA** recycling bin at Burwell, if not managed properly could look untidy and cause negative reaction to the local community. RS have stated that they will respond to any

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

- 1. By allowing the **TVAA** clothes recycling bin to be installed at Burwell Hall, this could be seen as a good thing for the Council to show support for those who need it.

Financial implications

- Zero as all associated costs of keeping the recycling bin in a fit for purpose standard will be managed by **RS** with support available from **TVAA**

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and

1. To decide on whether to support **TVAA** in locating a clothes recycling facility at Burwell Hall.

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Corn Exchange Business Report

Meeting Date: 17th March 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the events that have taken place since the last committee meeting and report on forthcoming events in the diary.

Background

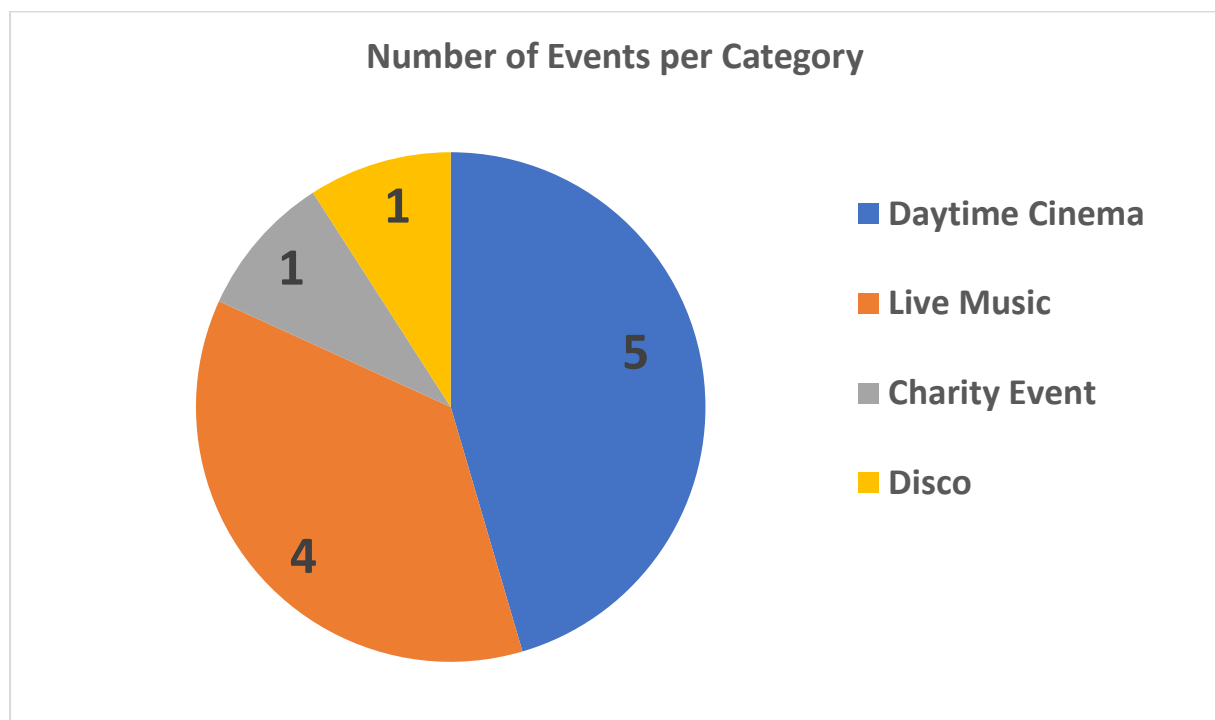
Witney Town Council has an obligation and objectives to provide an affordable, sustainable, inclusive and community arts facility that is valued and supported by the people of Witney and West Oxfordshire.

This includes providing availability to and encourage involvement from the entire community through offering a diverse range of music, arts and cultural events in the Corn Exchange.

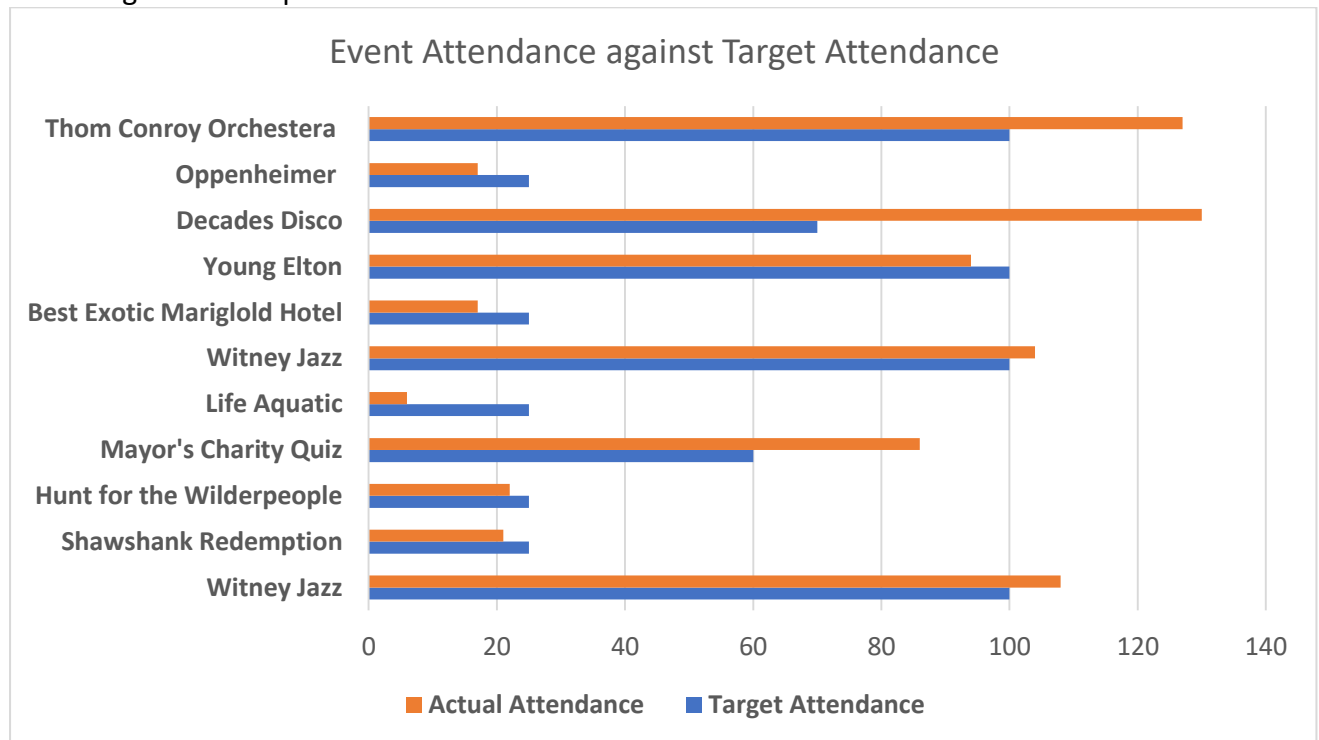
The Council will provide a professional, well-maintained, and run hireable space for private events including parties, weddings and conferences.

Current Situation

The graph below shows the number of events hosted by category, since the last report in January 2025.



The table below shows attendance figures for each event at The Corn Exchange since the last report, alongside a target attendance to show how each event is performing in line with officers' goals and expectations.



The figure shows that the events in January and February have, for the most part, been well attended and exceeded expectations on multiple occasions.

Recent events

Mayor's Charity Quiz

Mayor Owen Collins hosted another charity quiz at The Corn Exchange on 31 January, this time to a sold-out audience! These events have proven to be popular and are something that officers would like to continue once Councillor Collins' mayoral term has concluded.

Young Elton

This event is a returning favourite, previously hosted by a third-party promoter, this time ran as a Witney Town Council event on a ticket split basis. 94 people attended, meaning our share of the tickets covered what could've been group 4 hire rate. Young Elton is a talented tribute, and officers are proud that The Corn Exchange can host such high standard acts.

Smoke/Haze Effects: The Young Elton event included sound and lighting effects programmed to the show, which boosts attendee's visual experience. However, similarly to the Shadowing Hank show, the inability to use smoke/haze effects in the hall, significantly reduces the visual impact of the lighting effects. Using smoke or haze effects improves the visual experience of shows by making light beams more visible, adding depth and dimension to lighting, and enhancing the overall visual impact of stage lighting by scattering and reflecting light particles from the smoke, creating dramatic atmospheric effects on stage

Officers would like to work with our Fire Safety providers to conclude whether it is possible to safely allow these effects to be used, to bring us in line with venues across the country and significantly improve the visual experience.

Witney Jazz

The Witney Jazz events continue to be a popular addition to our events program, with 100+ attendees consistently. This year, the organisers have booked extra dates to program more shows alongside their regular 1st Friday of the month slot. Officers are delighted to continue our strong relationship with the organisers and look forward to welcoming their shows more frequently in 2025.

Decades Disco

This event was part of Witney Town Council's 50th anniversary celebration and led by our Community Engagement Team. The Decades Disco was a huge success in terms of attendance and income generated from ticket sales and bar sales. Dancefloor based events (non-seated), consistently produce higher bar sales due to the fluid nature of movement between the main hall and the bar. Windrush Radio provided a DJ for the night with professional sound and lighting.

Officers will build on the success of this event, by programming another themed Disco in the coming months, in the hope to attract back a repeat audience.

Thom Conroy and His Orchestra

The Corn Exchange welcomed the booking from local professional musician Thom Conroy, accompanied by his Orchestra. The event was extremely well attended with a sell-out audience. Officers are expecting to receive some high-quality photos and videos of the event to potentially use for promotional material if suitable.

Daytime Cinema

The attendance for the daytime cinema has remained at a similar level, excluding one outlier. However, as this event is low cost to run, and provides community value to an audience of mainly elderly people, officers are keen to continue this event. Recently, a local social group have started hosting socials in the café and have expressed interest in attending the cinema screenings which could significantly boost attendance in the coming months.

Upcoming Events

The Corn Exchange will continue to host the regular repeated in-house and third-party events below:

- Open Mic – First Thursday Every Month
- Witney Jazz – First Friday Every Month
- Tea Dance – Every Wednesday
- Daytime Cinema – Every other Tuesday
- Multiple Classes hosted by Buttercross Theatre – Every Week
- Witney Speakers Club – Every other Wednesday
- West Oxfordshire Art Society Lectures – Once a month
- St Mary's Art Group – Every Monday

- White Feather Spiritualist Church – Once a month

Officers have been working hard programming the first half of 2025 and look forward to the following events that are now confirmed in the diary, with many more to be finalised in the coming weeks.

- Wedding Singer (Buttercross Theatre) – 27th – 29th March
- Shadowing Hank – 5th April
- Every Brilliant Thing – 8th-9th April
- What you will – 19th April
- West End Magic – 26th April
- Take @ That – 31st May

Essential Companion Tickets

Following on from an approved request for free carers tickets for our West End Magic show in April, officers have researched industry standards on this matter. It has been concluded that, to bring ourselves forward with the below industry leading event organisations accessibility policy, free “Essential Companion Tickets” are recommended.

Live Nation: *“Live Nation operate a free carer ticket policy for customers requiring assistance. You may be asked to provide proof of needing a Free Essential Companion ticket prior to the show”*

ATG Tickets: *“We offer free Personal Assistant or Essential Companion tickets, subject to proof of eligibility which is administered by Nimbus Disability’s Access Card on our behalf. This facility is available to customers who require additional support or assistance as a result of a disability or long-term health condition, as defined by the Equality Act (2010).”*

Proof of eligibility: *To book Essential Companion tickets please provide:*

- *Nimbus Disability / Credibility Access Card with the +1 symbol.*

Officers recommend that Witney Town Council lead in improving accessibility standards locally by offering free Essential Companion Tickets for events Witney Town Council events held at The Corn Exchange.

Officers also recommend that the implementation of a free or discounted carers ticket policy into our group 4 booking terms and conditions for third-party events, to be discussed by members.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council’s Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality - The concept of equality when reporting on events is very important to the council, as it ensures fair and impartial coverage of all events and social groups within the community to reflect fairness, representation, and inclusivity.
- b) Biodiversity – Officers focus on the broader context of their actions when organising event to maintain the Council’s environmental and conservation efforts.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Council policies and operational processes adhered to by Officers include a multi-faceted approach that integrates crowd control, prevention of criminal activity, security planning, and compliance with relevant laws and regulations. Officers assess the risks relating to events ensuring the necessary due diligence, reviews, sign off and monitoring is completed. Post event analysis data is used to review opportunities for continuous improvement.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Careful consideration is given to the environmental and climate impacts to reduce negative effects and promote sustainability. Many aspects of event planning by the Council include venue location, transportation, recycling, local produce, and energy usage. By incorporating sustainable practices into every stage of event planning, the Council aims to reduce the environmental impact, create a positive attendee experience, and help lead the way for more responsible event management in the future.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Managing risks for Council events is a crucial aspect of event planning and requires careful thought to ensure the safety and success of all events. The Council’s risk management control measures for events covers legal considerations, safety protocols, insurance, and other key factors ensure these are delivered successfully.

Social Value

The Corn Exchange is registered as both a warm and safe space, providing a refuge from the elements, as well as a welcoming environment for socialising and engaging in conversation.

The Corn Exchange also hosts some events with a community focus.

- Open Mic – Provides a supportive environment for beginner local musicians perform and allows more established local artists a chance to share original music.
- Daytime Cinema – An affordable daytime activity, specifically an opportunity for pensioners to have a warm activity during the winter.

Financial implications

All events are evaluated from the planning stage to post event analysis to manage financial risk and maximise income.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Consider that the Council leads in improving accessibility standards locally by offering free Essential Companion Tickets for events Witney Town Council hold at The Corn Exchange.
2. Consider the implementation of a free or discounted carers ticket policy into the third-party events (Group 4) booking terms and conditions.

Year 1 - 2024 - Assets	Status	Update	Benefit
Review of current furniture in the Corn Exchange	Completed	The furniture in the Corn Exchange is deemed sufficient to meet the needs of hirers and events. Regular reviews will continue to meet the evolving demands of the venue. Any necessary updates or replacements will be considered as part of ongoing efforts to maintain the quality and functionality of the facilities.	Existing furniture is serving users of the hall well, the suitability and condition of furniture is kept under constant review
Tiered Seating: Identified need, established from feedback, for LED lighting to be installed on steps as luminescent strips don't hold charge long enough and make use of the stairs difficult in softer light.	Deferred	Officers have reviewed the potential to install LED lighting strips to the tiered seating in the Corn Exchange, with a quote for the project coming in at over £2,818.00 ex VAT from the manufacturer. After careful consideration, this project has been deferred for the time being, with priority now focusing on more essential works and improvements that align with the immediate needs of the venue. While the LED lighting remains a potential future enhancement, current resources and efforts are being directed toward more pressing requirements to maintain the hall's functionality and standards.	This is a project that should be completed when budgets allow, the increased visibility of the stair edges will provide safer navigation during events where the lighting is set at a low level.
Main Hall: Analyse the costs for full surround sound in the main hall triggered by results of customer feedback suggesting this that would provide an enhanced experience. Original installers of Hall upgrade have been approached for quotes	Completed	Following feedback from hirers, it has been determined that the current sound system installed in the Main Hall is sufficient to meet the needs of most events. As such, there is no immediate requirement to upgrade to a full surround sound system currently. However, this decision will be revisited in the future should the needs of the venue or hirers evolve, ensuring that the sound system continues to provide optimal performance for all events.	Currently existing system is working well and is suitable for hirers needs. Currently all hirers are getting the same level of use with no negative feedback received by staff. If this changes this can be acted on in due course.
Stage in Main Hall: Research costs of modular stage, more flexibility and easier set up for different events. Easier to store and reduced resource required. Officers are in the process of obtaining quotes.	Completed	While a modular lightweight stage would be beneficial for staff, as it would only require one person to assemble instead of two, the cost of replacing the current stage with a new one is considered cost-prohibitive at this time. As a result, this project will be reviewed annually to assess whether opportunities arise to implement it in the future, ensuring that any decision aligns with the venue's budget and operational needs.	The benefit of having a lighter stage would negate the need to have two members of staff present to put up or take down the stage, on average the stage takes 1 hour to assemble, this could be reduced to 20 minutes with a more accessible system.
Storage Solutions: Work with Project Officer to erect partition and doorway to storage area in the corridor behind the retractable seating.	Completed	The work to update and improve storage in the Corn Exchange has been completed. There is now additional storage underneath the main staircase, lockable storage behind the seating in the Main Hall and behind the stage area also in the Main Hall. The addition of this storage allows for better housekeeping standards to be maintained.	The new storage is complete, allowing staff to safely store the stage and trestle tables when not required, as well as maintaining a more presentable hall for people attending events.
Green Room Refresh: Updating furniture in artists rest area will make the C/E look more professional and attractive to visiting groups. Addition of smart sockets in Main Hall and artists rest areas	Deemed Sufficient	Work not yet commenced due to officers deeming current décor sufficient. Will be evaluated as part of ongoing hall improvements and acted upon as and when necessary.	New furniture would look smarter, but not an essential project at this time.
Digital Marketing Boards: Review options for digital marketing to include notice boards increasing professional visibility and attendance. Officers are looking into the cost and feasibility of this.	Cancelled	After consulting with the Conservation Officer at West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC), officers have decided not to move forward with the installation of external notice boards on the Grade II listed front of the Corn Exchange. This decision was made in consideration of preserving the building's historical integrity and in line with conservation guidelines.	Clearer marketing of events, less paper being used in the form of posters.

Year 1 - 2024 - Events	Status	Update	Benefit
Yearly schedule of events: to provide the town with the diverse and desired programme of events. Continual analysis of popularity, demand and success will help shape future events. Pilot new events to determine interest and value. Officers are working on a busy Autumn/Winter season, and all events will be marketed via the What's On guide, website, social media and physical advertising and reported to committee.	Completed	The Deputy Venue and Events Officer produces a quarterly <i>What's On</i> guide, which is distributed around the halls and advertised on social media. This guide serves to inform the community about upcoming events, ensuring greater visibility and encouraging engagement with the activities taking place at the Corn Exchange. Event reports are now submitted to committee through the Corn Exchange Business Report produced by the Deputy Venue and Events Officer.	Keeping members of the public informed of upcoming events in the Corn Exchange
Daytime Film Club: Film Club that is intended to appeal to a different market to those that are going to visit Cineworld or Similar. The Film Club focusses on classic films which aren't often shown on the big screen and the films screened are chosen by feedback from attendees of the screenings and advice from Officers who have a vested interest in film. The Film club is going to be held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month throughout the year to build momentum and gain regular audience numbers. This is actioned and implemented. Officers are also working on an afternoon film club for those that either don't want or can't attend evening screenings.	Completed Being Monitored	This is actioned and implemented with details of upcoming films advertised in the Corn Exchange, notice boards, website and social media.	Community engagement, and good promotion of the hall.

Tea Dance: The weekly Tea Dance that has proven to be an essential activity with many benefits (exercise, social interaction etc) supported by the Council serving the older residents of Witney and the surrounding areas. Explore opportunities for increased attendance.	Completed	Tea Dance is now operating at a level where there is no real room to increase numbers. Due to staff successfully working on the event the only other option would be to look at an alternative weekly time slot or destination where another dance could be run.	Community , exercise, social.
Box Office: To introduce a box office counter to support the ever popular and well attended annual Christmas pantomime includes up to 15 performances that is extremely popular including a relaxed performance, a show that's been adapted to suit people who might require a more relaxed environment when going to the theatre. Usually, these are adults or children with learning difficulties, autism or sensory communication disorders.	Being reviewed	The creation of a physical 'pop-up' box office has not yet been implemented, as its feasibility is largely dependent on factors such as the required size, available storage, and staffing resources. Further consideration will be given to these factors before proceeding with the installation, ensuring it aligns with the operational needs and capacity of the Corn Exchange.	Having a focal point to collect tickets and make enquiries would be extremely useful for staff and customers. Making for a smooth visitor experience when using the hall.
Indoor Markets: To reinstate the Council managed Indoor Markets to be held 2-4 times per month. This will be dependent on uptake however with planned promotions and liaison this is the target that has been set. The focus will be on themed markets on a rolling cycle i.e., antiques market, craft & gift market and tabletop car boot market. By defining the type of trade, we can advertise and promote accordingly to attract more sellers and drive footfall through the hall. Officer exploring this possibility and will implement if there is opportunity.	Completed To move to year 2 for another review	Currently, staff are not working on indoor markets, as the number of events held in the Main Hall on Saturdays does not allow for a regular calendar booking slot. This scheduling challenge makes it difficult to establish a consistent timeframe for such markets, but this may be revisited in the future if space and availability permit.	Council run markets would allow for more exposure of the hall as well as more income from people hiring tables.
National Theatre Live: Explore National Theatre Live to determine feasibility of screening live productions. Budget for the equipment required to meet their minimum standards will be a primary factor.	Completed	Officers have decided not to pursue NTL screenings at this time. With Cineworld already offering similar services in the area, it is felt that there would not be sufficient demand to make this initiative financially viable. As a result, the focus will remain on other programming and services that better align with the needs of the community and the Corn Exchange's current offerings.	Would be a benefit if not already running locally in town.

Year 1 - 2024 - Gallery Room Assets	Status	Update	Benefit
Equipment: replace and increase capacity of picture hanging system with the aim of attracting local artists, schools, photography clubs etc who would be interested in hiring the space. This would increase Highstreet visibility by driving footfall from different areas and to a different demographic. Officer are researching and will reach out to interested parties to have art work displayed in the room.	Completed	The Gallery Room hanging rails are now actively being used by local art groups, providing an excellent space to showcase and promote the work of local artists. This addition enhances the venue's role in supporting the local arts community and adds a dynamic element to showcase art at the Corn Exchange.	Community engagement, sense of pride for local people looking to use the hall.
Modernise the IT infrastructure by installing USB plug points and conferencing equipment to modernise existing offer for users. This would result in a more desirable function room with a better offer and industry standard facilities. Officers are in the process of obtaining quotes for this. Work with project officer to ascertain feasibility of a ceiling mounted projector and wall mounted retractable screen. This is a standard in other halls and one that will increase use of the room when advertised correctly. The Conferencing system is being finalised and will be installed shortly.	To obtain Quotes	The work to install conferencing equipment has been thoroughly researched, and all specifications are now out to tender. This process will ensure that the chosen solution meets the venue's needs and is aligned with the required technical standards.	Having additional facilities will allow staff to advertise the Gallery Room and pick up additional bookings which wouldn't otherwise look to use the Corn Exchange

Year 2 - 2025 - Assets	Status	Update	Benefit
Equipment: Review equipment and ensure it is still up to standard for events being run. By identifying any problem areas, it will be possible to budget for any works in due course, keeping the hall relevant and a destination choice for professional acts.	Year 2	Equipment is still performing to a high standard for events being held in the hall, no need to change or update anything at this time. Will be kept under review.	Decent user and staff experience, easier to market with high end equipment.
new modular stage, easier to set up allowing for more flexibility and less hourly cost for staff to set up.	Year 2	While a modular lightweight stage would be beneficial for staff, as it would only require one person to assemble instead of two, the cost of replacing the current stage with a new one is considered cost-prohibitive at this time. As a result, this project will be reviewed annually to assess whether opportunities arise to implement it in the future, ensuring that any decision aligns with the venue's budget and operational needs. modular stage quotes are coming in between £5 -£9K.	The benefit of having a lighter stage would negate the need to have two members of staff present to put up or take down the stage, on average the stage takes 1 hour to assemble, this could be reduced to 20 minutes with a more accessible system.
Full surround sound equipment, gives best offer to hirers and will enhance the reputation of the Main Hall.	Year 2	Still not deemed necessary to complement the existing equipment in the hall, will be kept under review	Enhanced cinema experience
Review of main Hall floor condition, need to maintain standard to continue building reputation.	Being Monitored	Floor in the Main Hall is holding up well and not currently needing to be sanded or replaced.	Keeping on top of standards to hold onto reputation as high end facility

Tiered Seating: Identified need, established from feedback, for LED lighting to be installed on steps as luminescent strips don't hold charge long enough and make use of the stairs difficult in softer light.	Year 2	Officers have approached alternative seating manufacturers to obtain quotes for the retroactive installation of LED stair strips on the tiered seating in the Main Hall. This upgrade aims to enhance visibility and safety for attendees while maintaining the venue's high standards.	This is a project that should be completed when budgets allow, the increased visibility of the stair edges will provide safer navigation during events where the lighting is set at a low level.
--	--------	---	--

Year 2 - 2025 - Events	Status	Update	Benefit
Review of past 12 months, reconfirm which events were successful and those that weren't, learn which ones to promote in the coming year.	Year 2	All events held at the Corn Exchange are carefully monitored to ensure they offer the best value for money for local residents, while remaining accessible to all. Each event is thoughtfully considered, with a diverse range of activities chosen, including magic shows, live music, cinema, and theatre performances. This variety ensures that the Corn Exchange continues to serve as a vibrant hub for entertainment and cultural experiences for the community.	Accesible events for all is the ultimate goal and mission statement of the events team
Box Office: To introduce a box office counter to support the ever popular and well attended annual Christmas pantomime includes up to 15 performances that is extremely popular including a relaxed performance, a show that's been adapted to suit people who might require a more relaxed environment when going to the theatre. Usually, these are adults or children with learning difficulties, autism or sensory communication disorders.	Year 2	Officers have contacted local carpentry firms to obtain quotes for a new portable or 'pop-up' box office counter. The design will need to be compact and fold away to accommodate the storage constraints and challenges within the Corn Exchange, ensuring it remains both practical and space-efficient.	Having a focal point to collect tickets and make enquiries would be extremely useful for staff and customers. Making for a smooth visitor experience when using the hall.

Year 2 - 2025 - Gallery Room Assets	Status	Update	Benefit
Equipment: Review of equipment, look to update and maintain as required to keep room as viable destination for multitude of different events.	Year 2	The conferencing system has been successfully installed in the Gallery Room, and a user guide has been created by Officers to ensure smooth operation. With careful marketing of this new resource, it is expected that bookings will increase and a wider demographic will be attracted to the hall, expanding the range of events and functions that can be hosted.	Makes the Gallery Room more attractive as a hirable splace to different uers.

Document is Restricted

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS



Agenda Item: Cemetery & Burial Regulations Review

Meeting Date: 17th of March 2025

Contact Officer: Operations Manager – Angus Whitburn

Background

The cemetery regulations outline the processes and rules Witney Town Council follow as the Burial authority in Witney. These regulations are written in accordance with rules, acts and legislations for the management of burial grounds and guidance from The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management.

Witney Town Council cemetery regulations were overhauled in July 2022. The large rework of the document and reaffirmation of rules, regulations and processes has helped to better manage the cemeteries, administration and management of contractors.

Current Situation

The review of the cemetery regulations has mainly been limited to rewording and reformatting certain sections of the document so it can be better interpreted. However, 3 major additions and amendments have been made to the document as listed and explained below. The document still needs to undergo reformatting so it reads more coherently.

Proof of Identity and Address

This addition is a requirement to ensure the council doesn't face a legal challenge with the administration of its cemeteries. Those entering the offices should present identification with their applications so officers can be confident they are dealing with who is listed on the exclusive right of burial.

Transfers of Exclusive Rights of Burial

As the burial authority, the council has a responsibility to ensure all due diligence investigations have been carried out before transferring an EROB to a new grantee. Currently, some of that process is with undertakers and it has created issues when council officers have requested evidence to complete the transfer. To help this process and to ensure the council is meeting its responsibility as the burial authority in Witney all EROB transfers will be managed by the council.

Vaults

Historically the interment into vaults and construction of vaults has been the responsibility of the burial manager (usually an undertaker). However, breaching policy the council have reopened a vault, installed a vault liner and overseen the construction of a vault in the last 2 years. Each of these has been done against policy and has been completed by the council to ensure the family request is met.

With the knowledge gained by council officers and research into the process, we can now start managing vault interments and installations.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – The Cemeteries are options to all religious beliefs and burial practices found in Witney. My managing vault interment the council will be offering a service normally requested by the traveller community.
- b) Biodiversity – There is a wildflower meadow at Windrush Cemetary and the middle section of Tower Hill is on a rewilding maintenance programme.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Rules are in place at cemeteries and supported by signage. When any social behaviour or acts are reported council staff will forward these to the police.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

As the burial authority, the council has a duty to ensure it is managing its burial ground in line with acts, laws and legislation relating to burial grounds. The review of the Cemetery regulation has been made in line with these requirements.

The changes to the transfers of EROBs could cause complaints from undertakers, as the current process helps undertakers process a new EROB grantee quickly. However, they pressure council staff to process statutory declarations which should not be used, claiming deceased EROB holders left no will and there are no transfer rights of the EROB in existence.

Financial implications

- There are no additional financial implications to the council from the review of the Cemetery regulations.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and

1. Approve the reviewed cemetery regulations.
2. Delegate to officers to complete the formatting of the cemetery regulations.



Cemetery Regulations

March 2025

1. Definitions and interpretation

- 1.1. **WTC, Town Council, Council** – Witney Town Council, the local burial authority which have the power to manage and provide burial grounds
- 1.2. **EROB** – Exclusive Right of Burial
- 1.3. **Full Interment** – the burial of a non-cremated body
- 1.4. **Ashes Interment** – the burial of cremated remains
- 1.5. The certificate for burial or cremation commonly known as the ‘green form’ or ‘registrar’s certificate’
- 1.6. Statutory declaration
- 1.7. Spent
- 1.8. Burial authority – Witney Town Council

2. Law and Jurisdiction

- 2.1. These regulations shall be governed by the laws of England and shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

3. Variations

- 3.1. These Cemetery Regulations supersede and replace any prior regulations, terms, or conditions previously in effect. We reserve the right to modify, amend, or update these Cemetery Regulations at any time without prior notice. Any such changes will be effective immediately upon the date stated on the document.

4. General cemetery Information

4.1. Windrush Cemetery Access

- 4.1.1. Windrush cemetery is permanently open to members of the public with parking available near the entrance to the cemetery. The road around the grave sections is only designed as an access road for works vehicles and funeral cortège.
- 4.1.2. The cemetery isn’t open for vehicles during ceremonies.
 - 4.1.2.1. A sign will be placed on the entrance and car parking controlled by cemetery operatives.
 - 4.1.2.2. No notice will be issued of closure for a ceremony.

4.2. Tower Hill Cemetery Access

- 4.2.1. Tower Hill Cemetery is open Monday through Friday between the hours of 09:00 – 16:00. The gates are unlocked and locked by Town Council staff and contractors. On request, the bollards gaining access around sections 6, 7 and 8 can be removed for vehicles. Please make this request at least 24 hours prior to your visit by calling the Council offices.

4.2.2. During weekends the gates are unlocked between 7:00 – 11:00 and the bollards are removed for access around sections 6,7 and 8.

4.2.2.1. For ceremonies, the main vehicle gates and the north pedestrian gate will be locked.

4.2.2.2. No notice will be issued of closure for a ceremony.

4.3. Cemetery Rules

4.4. The following general rules are applicable across both cemeteries and are considered an offence within the cemetery grounds.

4.4.1. General Rules

4.4.1.1. Dogs are permitted in the cemetery but must be on leads at all times and all waste must be cleared up.

4.4.1.2. No parking in any areas of the cemeteries that are not designated parking spaces.

4.4.1.3. Bicycles must not be ridden within the cemetery

4.4.1.4. All rubbish must be cleared away

4.4.1.5. The amplifying of any music or disturbing sound

4.4.2. Offences within the cemetery

4.4.2.1. wilfully create any disturbance in a cemetery

4.4.2.2. commit any nuisance in a cemetery

4.4.2.3. wilfully interfere with any burial taking place in a cemetery

4.4.2.4. wilfully interfere with any grave or vault, any tombstone or other memorial, or any flowers or plants on any such matter

4.4.2.5. play any game or sport in a cemetery

5. Burial plots and interment options

5.1. Lawn Burials

Lawn burials are the standard burial plot offered at both Windrush and Tower Hill Cemetery. They can accommodate one or two full interments depending on the cemetery. All lawn burials can have a memorial installed along with a small garden area, subject to the purchase of EROB.

5.1.1. At Windrush Cemetery, all lawn burials are at double depth to accommodate two full interments.

5.1.1.1. Only once two full interments have been completed can the remaining grave space be used for ashes interments.

5.1.1.2. No ashes interments are permitted until the plot space has been fully buried, at Windrush this is two full interments and one single interment at Tower Hill.

5.1.1.3. If an applicant wishes to spread ashes on a grave this can be accommodated by peeling back the turf layer and spreading the ashes over the surface of the soil.

5.1.1.4. The charge for this will be the same as an ashes interment

- 5.1.1.5. To perform a future burial this layer of soil will have to be disturbed, and the cremated remains will be moved from the resting place.
- 5.1.2. Tower Hill lawn burials are at a single-depth
- 5.1.3. All bodies must be interred within a coffin.
 - 5.1.3.1. The coffin must have a nameplate for the interred.
 - 5.1.3.2. Due to burying at double depth, it is required that cemetery staff can correctly identify an interment at the 1st level before interring the second body.

5.2. Muslim burials

Muslim burial plots are provided which are correctly orientated in accordance with religious beliefs. All Muslim plots are single-depth burials.

- 5.2.1. Burials are permitted in either a coffin or wrapped in a shroud
- 5.2.2. In the case where a burial shroud is used the funeral organisers must backfill the grave so that the body is no longer visible to council staff who will complete the backfill.
- 5.2.3. When wrapped in a shroud a suitable container must be used to transport the deceased to the graveside.
- 5.2.4. The funeral organiser can line the base of the grave with brushwood or softwood boards to a depth no greater than 30mm.
- 5.2.5. On the expiry of exclusive rights of burial, any headstone may be removed by the council, but no further interments will take place in any available plot space.

5.3. Meadow burials

A wildflower meadow is in place at Windrush Cemetery for interments. The overall concept of this area is to grow and maintain a flowering meadow. The meadow can have up to 3 cuts each year these are in the spring, summer and autumn with the main summer cut being a collection. Further cuts for winter maintenance may be used to help maintain weeds and supplementary seeding in March and April. Once the ground has recompacted in the meadow section a wildflower mix will be sown.

- 5.3.1. Rules differing from standard burials for meadow burials are as follows
- 5.3.2. Exclusive rights of burial cannot be purchased
- 5.3.3. Plots cannot be reserved
- 5.3.4. No embalmed bodies
- 5.3.5. No form of grave marker can be installed
- 5.3.6. Identification
 - 5.3.6.1. As no grave maker can be placed the record of burial will be the standard council process but additionally, a grave marker peg will be buried in the ground.
 - 5.3.6.2. The plots will be identified if needed in future through a grave maker peg that contains an electronic readable tag (RFID tag).
 - 5.3.6.3. This RFID tag will be recorded across the burial book and cemetery management software.

5.4. Woodland Burials

Woodland burials are interred at the bottom section of Windrush cemetery. These offer an environmentally friendly burial option but are also a cheaper burial option. The option has been designed to have the lowest carbon footprint option across both Witney cemeteries.

- 5.4.1. Only single-depth interments
- 5.4.2. Exclusive rights of burial cannot be purchased

- 5.4.3. Plots cannot be reserved
- 5.4.4. No embalmed bodies
- 5.4.5. No form of grave marker can be installed
 - 5.4.5.1. This includes immediately after an interment; all flowers will be removed directly following the interment by town council staff.
 - 5.4.5.2. The intended purpose of the area is to be as environmentally conscious as possible, so it is encouraged that flowers are not organised for a funeral.
- 5.4.6. All burials must take place in an eco-friendly coffin or burial shroud
 - 5.4.6.1. Bamboo, banana leaf, willow, cardboard
- 5.4.7. In the case where a burial shroud is used the funeral organisers must backfill the grave so that the body is no longer visible to council staff who will complete the backfill.
- 5.4.8. Oversized coffins are not permitted.
- 5.4.9. The plots will be identified if needed in future through a grave maker peg that contains an RFID tag.
- 5.4.10. Once a predefined section has reached capacity trees and wildflower perennial bulbs will be planted to create small woodland areas.

5.5. Children's and Baby Plots

- 5.5.1. Separate smaller children's and baby plots are offered at Windrush Cemetery which are used for the children's funeral fund. They have been designed to inter at a later date the ashes of the parents/guardians.
 - 5.5.1.1. Baby: 0.9m length x 0.66m width
 - 5.5.1.2. Children's: 1.5m length 0.99m width
 - 5.5.1.3. Children's and babies' plots EROB are sold at 90 years
- 5.5.2. Once a full interment has taken place the interment of 2 sets of ashes can be completed on top.
- 5.5.3. Memorials are a smaller size which is listed on the separate memorial sizes document.

5.6. Ashes Path

Windrush Cemetery has a paved ashes path for the interment of ashes caskets.

- 5.6.1. Each ashes plot can accommodate two caskets
- 5.6.2. The EROB must be purchased.
- 5.6.3. Only a sloping desk tablet can be installed.

5.7. Family Ashes Plots

Tower Hill Cemetery has family ashes plots for the interment of ashes, each plot can accommodate up to 8 ashes caskets.

- 5.7.1. Only a standard lawn grave memorial can be installed here.

5.8. Scattering of Ashes

Ashes may be scattered at cemeteries with permission from Witney Town Council. There are designated ashes scattering beds at both cemeteries.

- 5.8.1. Written permission must be obtained from Witney Town Council, this can be in the form of an email
- 5.8.2. A date and time must be agreed with the council offices

5.8.2.1. Witney Town council staff are regularly carrying out maintenance in the cemeteries and if they have not been made aware they will stop the scattering of any ashes.

5.8.3. The scattering of ashes onto grave plots is not permitted even if the EROB is purchased for that plot.

5.8.3.1. The scattering of ashes is not accurate, and the ashes can easily be distributed onto neighbouring plots by the weather or inaccuracy in the process. This can be seen as offensive by those interred into other plots.

5.9. Memorial plaques and stones

5.9.1. Memorial plaques can be installed on the memorial wall at Tower Hill Cemetery or the Memorial headstone at Windrush Cemetery.

5.9.2. Memorial stones can be installed in the stone pond in the children's memorial garden at Windrush Cemetery.

5.9.3. An interment for those named on a memorial plaque does not have to have taken place in the cemetery.

5.9.4. An application form must be completed for the installation of a memorial plaque.

5.9.4.1. The size, material and inlay colour of the memorial plaques are determined by cemetery officers to ensure all plaques are uniform.

6. Schedule of Interment

The Town Council will follow the below process for all interments in its cemeteries. The interment process will be managed in cooperation with the undertaker and/or funeral organiser.

6.1. A completed interment form must be submitted to the council as the notice of interment.

6.1.1. This must be complete with the grave plot number and date and time of interment.

6.1.1.1. If the grave plot to be used is not owned by the deceased, the EROB owner must provide written permission for its use.

6.1.1.2. This must be submitted along with the interment form.

6.2. The date and time of the interment will be arranged with the Town Council.

6.3. All efforts will be made to offer the time and date requested.

6.4. As the burial authority, dates and times of interment are entirely at the discretion of the Town Council.

6.5. A burial time should first be organised with the Town Council before any other party.

6.6. Times and dates are managed based on the factors

6.6.1. Other interment bookings

6.6.2. Staffing

6.6.3. Equipment availability

6.6.4. Grave location

6.6.5. Proximity to open graves

6.6.6. Excavation time

6.6.7. Public holidays

6.7. After a completed interment form has been received cemetery operatives will then begin the process of excavating and preparing the grave space.

6.8. All paperwork must then be submitted 24 hours prior to the time of the interment.

6.9. Once the interment has been completed the burial will be recorded by cemeteries operatives in the relevant cemeteries burial register.

6.9.1. This must be signed off by the undertaker/funeral organiser.

7. Graveside preparation and backfilling

7.1. All graves are prepared for interment to avoid the sight of excavated soil

7.1.1. All excavated soil will be covered with a tarp

7.1.2. The graveside will be dressed with artificial grass, this includes the ashes interments in the ashes path at Windrush Cemetery.

7.1.3. The excavated soil is placed on the neighbouring grave.

7.1.3.1. If the funeral organisers wish for the excavated soil to be located away from the interred grave this must be requested at the first notice of the burial and confirmed by Witney Town Council.

7.1.3.1.1. An additional charge will be charged for this service.

8. Cancellations and additional charges

8.1. Cancellations

8.1.1. If an interment has to be cancelled by Witney Town Council due to any paperwork not being submitted the full burial charge will be charged to the undertaker/funeral organiser.

8.1.2. The final submission for any paperwork is 24 hours before the time of interment and by this time the burial plot would have been prepared and in some circumstances require to be backfilled.

8.1.3. It is the responsibility of the undertaker/funeral organiser to ensure the arrival of the procession arrives on the times detailed on the interment form.

8.1.4. Certain considerations will be made if the cancellation is a result of exceptional circumstances, but this will be at the discretion of the Town Council.

8.2. Late Arrival and departures

8.2.1. Additional fees will be charged for late arrivals and departures.

8.2.1.1. The undertaker/funeral organiser is responsible for the timekeeping of the ceremony.

8.2.2. These fees will be charged in increments of 15 minutes.

8.2.3. The fee is listed on the burial charges as the late fee.

8.2.4. The time allocated for a ceremony is 45 minutes.

8.3. If the interment is the second interment into a lawn or ashes plot the undertaker/funeral organiser must pay any associated charges for the removal of a memorial.

8.3.1. This should be identified at the first notice of interment.

8.3.2. This is exclusive for memorials in situ on the grave plot of interment

8.4. Changing interment dates

8.4.1. Any amendment to a final submitted date will be charged at the fee listed on the burial charges list.

8.4.1.1. The date submitted on the interment form is the final submitted date.

8.4.1.2. A funeral director/funeral organiser by booking a date is removing availability to others.

8.4.1.3. Reasonable changes to funeral times will not be charged.

8.5. Oversized burials

8.5.1. Oversized burials will be charged an additional fee above the maximum casket sizes stated below.

8.5.1.1. Maximum length (feet to Head) 213cm

8.5.1.2. Maximum width (Commonly the shoulders of the coffin) 71cm

8.5.1.3. Maximum depth 58cm

8.5.2. The oversized burial fee is listed on the burial charges lists as oversized burials.

8.6. Weekend Burials

8.6.1. Will be charged at the hours worked by 3 cemetery operatives at a weekend rate plus the standard burial fee and all other associated charges.

9. Burial Times

9.1. Burials are available in both cemeteries Monday – Friday excluding public holidays. Available burial times change throughout the year based on daylight saving.

9.1.1. **November to March:** 11:00 – 14:00

9.1.2. **April to October:** Monday – Thursday 11:00 – 15:00, Friday 11:00 – 14:00

9.2. The times listed above are not inclusive of the entire ceremony time a booking can be accepted at the latest time listed.

9.3. In exceptional circumstances, burials can be arranged for a weekend, but this will be at the Town council's discretion and will normally be based on the availability of staff.

9.4. There are no assurances that a weekend burial can be arranged and would entirely be based on staff availability.

10. Burial Notice

A minimum of 3 working days' notice is required prior to any burial, not including the date of burial. This time is required to complete the administration, excavation and preparation of a grave space including ashes plots.

10.1. Witney Town Council cannot ensure that every interment can be accepted with 3 days' notice, some factors will affect this time frame.

10.1.1. If a headstone needs to be removed the funeral organisers will be responsible for its removal and only once removed can cemetery operatives complete the excavation and preparation of the grave space.

10.2. The certificate for burial or cremation commonly known as the 'green form' or 'registrar's certificate' must be delivered to the Town Council office no later than 24 hours before the date of interment.

10.3. This can be emailed, sent via post or delivered in person.

10.4. Witney Town Council accepts no responsibility for lost certificates for burial in the post.

10.5. It is an offence of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 if the certificate of burial has been lost, failed to be delivered or forged.

10.6. No burial will take place if the certificate for burial has not been supplied 24hrs before the time of interment.

11. Exclusive rights of Burial

- 11.1. The exclusive rights of burial permit the grantee the right of burial within a grave plot and to anyone they give permission. It also gives the grantee permission to erect a headstone.
- 11.2. The exclusive right of burial grant will list the burial authority (this will always be WTC for council cemeteries), cost of the grant, grave space, section, cemetery, date of EROB, term of EROB and personal details including email address. The grant will be issued to the grantee and a copy retained by Witney Town Council which will also be stored digitally.

12. Limitations

- 12.1. The EROB does not give the grantee a right to the land but only the exclusive right to say who can be buried and erect a headstone. All other rules and regulations must be followed.

13. Term of Exclusive Rights of Burial

- 13.1. The length of the EROB will run for a set period from the date of purchase that will be stated on the grant. Currently, this length of time is 30 years for Windrush Cemetery and 30 years for Tower Hill Cemetery. WTC may make amendments to the EROB period this would only affect the sale of new EROB and the renewal of any EROB.
- 13.2. As a burial authority, the council cannot issue or extend the rights of burial in perpetuity or for a period beyond 100 years. Witney Town Council would not extend the EROB period beyond the terms aforementioned for each cemetery.
 - 13.2.1. The exception is for Commonwealth War Graves of which EROB in perpetuity will be granted or assumed.

14. Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial Back to the Burial Authority

- 14.1. At any time, a grantee of the EROB can transfer back the grant to the council. The council will purchase the rights back at the cost of the original purchase. This will be the cost listed on the grant of the EROB.
- 14.2. The council will only purchase back the EROB if there is unused grave space, for example, plots are in a re-usable condition as below.
 - 14.2.1. Windrush, only a single burial has taken place at double depth.
 - 14.2.2. Tower Hill, a minimum of 4 or more remaining ashes plots within 1 grave space.

15. Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial

- 15.1. All EROB transfers will be administered by the burial authority.
- 15.2. WTC will charge a fee for the transfer that is listed in the burial charges.
- 15.3. The remaining term of the EROB will not be renewed on transfer.
- 15.4. A new deed will be issued to the new grantee and a copy retained by WTC and stored digitally.
- 15.5. Living Grantee
 - 15.5.1. An EROB owner can at any time transfer an owned EROB to a new grantee.
 - 15.5.2. The original EROB document will need to be provided along with the following documentation.
 - 15.5.2.1. Proof of identity of the current EROB owner and new grantee.
 - 15.5.2.2. Proof of residency of the new EROB owner.

15.5.2.2.1. If the residency status of section 21 cannot be met by the new grantee then an additional EROB fee will be charged to fall in line with the rate for non-residents.

15.5.2.2.1.1. This fee will be an additional fee of the original EROB sale price to compensate for the non-residency status.

15.5.2.2.1.2. This fee will only be charged if there is remaining grave space for a full interment or additional ashes interment in ashes plots only.

15.5.2.3. Written signed confirmation from the original grantee transferring the EROB to the new the new named grantee.

15.6. Deceased Grantee

15.7. If the EROB grantee is the deceased being interred into the EROB's stated plot then an EROB transfer is not required.

15.8. If the EROB has not been spent (A memorial stone is still to be erected or further interments can still take place) the transfer of the EROB to a new grantee should be arranged.

15.8.1. There is no requirement to transfer an EROB on the death of the original owner. This only needs to take place if a beneficiary wishes to utilize an EROB that has not been spent.

15.8.2. To transfer the EROB of a deceased grantee the following documents must be provided.

15.8.2.1. The Original EROB

15.8.2.2. The deceased will, if there is one;

15.8.2.3. An original grant of probate or letting of administration where there is no will.

15.8.2.4. Proof of identity of the new grantee.

15.8.3. In circumstances where the current owner has died without specifically giving the exclusive right to a named beneficiary, the burial authority may transfer the right via a statutory declaration to a family member with a valid claim.

15.8.3.1. In these circumstances is the legal responsibility of the burial authority to carry out due diligence investigation at the applicant's cost.

15.8.3.2. In circumstances where other family members have competing claims, all must renounce their claims for a statutory declaration to be completed.

15.8.3.2.1. In circumstances where other family members cannot be contacted to renounce their claims, the EROB cannot be transferred.

15.8.3.2.1.1. At the burial authorities' discretion permission may be granted to the grantee to erect a headstone, without an EROB with the disclaimer that it must be removed at the grantee's cost should a competing claimant come forward.

16. Renewal of Exclusive Rights of Burial

16.1. A grantee of EROB can renew the EROB once at the expiry date or for a period of up to 30 days prior to the expiry. The renewal fee and term of EROB will be the current cost and term set by WTC.

16.2. WTC will attempt to contact grantees of EROB where their period of exclusive rights is due to end. Attempts to make contact for renewal will only be made if there is usable

grave space within a plot where the intent by WTC is to reutilise this space. This process will only happen in such a place that previous burials will not be disturbed and as aforementioned, there is unused grave space.

- 16.3.** Contact will be made through all forms listed on the EROB and any updated contact details held by WTC. If a period of 30 days has passed since the first contact was attempted, then no further contact will be attempted.
- 16.4.** This will include standard forms of contact over the phone, post and email but may also involve attaching a letter to the headstone of the plot.
- 16.5.** If all reasonable contact has been attempted and a period of 30 days has passed, then the council will start the process of reutilising the plot for further burials.

17. Re-use of Grave space

- 17.1.** The Town Council will reclaim and resell unused grave spaces once the EROB has expired.
- 17.2.** This is providing that any future burials in a plot do not interfere with a burial that has previously taken place.
- 17.3.** This will be done as detailed in 12.3.
- 17.4.** It is also within the power of the council to raise the level of the ground above a single interment to accommodate further burials. This would only be done where the EROB has expired.

18. Commonwealth war graves

- 18.1.** As the burial authority, the Town Council may grant the right to the Commonwealth War graves Commission to provide a memorial on an identified Commonwealth War grave.
- 18.2.** The exclusive right of burial on these graves will be in perpetuity
- 18.3.** The Town Council's power to remove memorials cannot be exercised without the consent of the commission.

19. Public graves

- 19.1.** Public graves, also known as common graves or paupers' graves are grave spaces of which no EROB or memorial rights exist.
- 19.2.** Public graves will be used when no other arrangements have been made for the deceased.
- 19.3.** There is no private right for anyone to place a tombstone or other memorial on the surface of the grave.

20. Record Keeping

- 20.1.** All interments will be recorded on the date of interment in the cemeteries' burial register.
 - 20.1.1. This must be signed by the undertaker/funeral organiser
- 20.2.** Interments will then be recorded separately in the register of burials by a council officer, with details to include.
 - 20.2.1. Surname
 - 20.2.2. Forenames
 - 20.2.3. Address

- 20.2.4. Profession
- 20.2.5. Age
- 20.2.6. Date of death
- 20.2.7. Place of death
- 20.2.8. Date of burial
- 20.2.9. Section and grave number
- 20.2.10. Woodland and meadow burials will have the RFID number stored in the burials book and digital system.

20.3. Full details of the interment will also be stored on the councils' digital burials system.

20.4. Cemetery mapping

20.4.1. Plans of all graves are stored digitally and physically at Town council offices. Details include.

- 20.4.1.1. Plot numbers
- 20.4.1.2. Grave numbers
- 20.4.1.3. Number of burials
- 20.4.1.4. Location of ashes

21. Residency

21.1. A resident of Witney is defined as someone who;

- 21.1.1. Currently lives within the Witney town boundary
- 21.1.2. Lived in Witney in the last 5 years or been a resident of Witney for a 30-year cumulated period.
 - 21.1.2.1. Acceptable evidence of residency in Witney for the past 5 years or a cumulated period will need to be provided.
- 21.1.3. For non-residents, double rates are charged for EROBs and interments.

21.1.3.1. The rate will be double what is listed on the burial charges list.

21.2. When reserving a grave space, the EROB must be purchased, the charge for the EROB will be based on the residency of the purchaser.

21.3. The burial charge will be based on the residency of the deceased and not the EROB holder if not already the deceased.

21.4. Proof of identity and residency will need to be provided for the purchase of an EROB.

21.4.1.1. Proof of identity coupled with proof of residency will have to be provided via a driver's license or passport along with a utility bill or bank statement no more than 3 months old.

21.4.2. If the certificate for burial or cremation lists an address not within the Witney town boundary then then proof of identity and residency will have to be supplied with the interment form.

22. Reserving grave spaces

22.1. Grave spaces can only be reserved for the following burial plots

22.1.1. Lawn Burials

22.1.2. Ashes plots

22.1.3. Family Ashes Plots

22.2. A section of the cemetery is held for grave reservation while a separate section is designated for immediate burials.

22.2.1. If an applicant wishes to reserve a grave space out of that rotation an additional fee will be charged

22.3. When reserving a grave space, the EROB must be purchased.

22.4. No one person can reserve more than two burial plots.

23. Children's Funeral Fund

23.1. The Children's Funeral Fund for England can help to pay for some of the costs of a funeral for a child under 18 or a baby stillborn after the 24th week of pregnancy.

23.2. The children's funeral fund can help pay for the following

23.2.1. Burial fees

23.2.2. Cremation fees, including the cost of a doctor's certificate

23.2.3. Coffin (up to the cost of £300)

23.3. Responsibilities to make a claim

23.3.1. A claim for the burial through the scheme is made by the council as the burial provider.

23.3.2. A claim for a coffin will be made by the funeral director or if not using a funeral director the funeral organiser must make this.

23.3.3. Cremation claims needed to be made by the cremation provider.

23.4. Limitations

23.4.1. The children's funeral fund will cover the cost of an appropriately sized grave to the size of the body. Full interments are currently only possible in Windrush cemetery which offers adult, child and baby sized plots.

23.4.2. Witney town council will only use the fund to cover an appropriately sized plot for burial.

23.4.3. In the instant, a full double-depth adult plot has requested the difference in cost will have to be paid to the council.

23.4.4. If a required child or baby plot is unavailable a full adult plot will be offered.

24. Cemeteries Maintenance

24.1. Grave Mounds

24.1.1. From the date of interment for 1 year a mound of soil will be maintained at 20cm above ground level.

24.1.1.1. This is necessary as the backfilled excavated soil recompacts over a period of one year.

24.1.1.2. The area cannot be planted in

24.1.1.3. Flowers and wreaths may be laid but this will be moved to the head of the grave when the soil is topped up.

24.2. Levelling

24.2.1. After 1 year has elapsed from the date of interment the grave will be levelled during the next Spring or Autumn.

24.2.2. The grave will be levelled to the ground with topsoil free of large stones and then grass-seeded.

24.2.3. Periodical, graves of those who have been interred for over 1 year may require a re-levelling to level the surface of the ground for maintenance purposes.

24.2.3.1. This is typically done in sections, and notice will be issued via staked signs.

24.3. Grounds Maintenance

24.3.1. Both Tower Hill and Windrush Cemetery are maintained as lawned cemeteries and are cut short.

24.3.2. The historic central section of Tower Hill and the meadow and woodland at Windrush are maintained on wildflower regimes.

24.4. Memorial Testing

24.4.1. From the date of installation, all memorials undergo a safety inspection every 5 years

24.4.1.1. This process is completed by Witney Town Council as the burial authority through the use of contractors or employees.

24.4.2. The testing uses non-intrusive methods to assess the stability and safety of a memorial against N.A.M.M standards.

24.4.3. All testing is carried out by staff trained in S.I.A.M (Safety Inspection and Assessment of Memorials Safety)

24.4.4. Prior notification to testing will be in the form of staked signs in the relevant cemetery.

24.4.5. Any memorials that require remedial action from testing will be the responsibility of the EROB grant owner.

24.4.5.1. The Town Council will contact the EROB owner with the required remedial works to be carried out.

24.4.5.2. If an adequate amount of time has passed from the initial contact the town council will make the memorial safe through the most economic means.

24.4.5.2.1. Laying the memorial flat on the ground.

24.4.5.2.2. Fencing the grave area for safety.

24.5. Damage to Memorials

24.5.1. The Town Council accepts no liability for damage to memorials that is caused by any means other than gross negligence of cemetery operatives.

24.5.1.1. For example, the council will not be held responsible for minor damages caused by mowing activities.

24.5.1.1.1. In the event of damage caused by gross negligence by a cemetery operative, such as plant equipment hitting and fracturing a memorial, the council will cover the cost of repairs.

24.5.1.1.2. The incident would have to be documented for the Town Council to accept liability, an incident report or photographic evidence of the incident would be required.

24.5.1.2. It is recommended that EROB owners take out an insurance policy on memorials against damage including public liability.

24.6. Excavation process

24.6.1. In the process of excavating a grave for an interment, the excavated soil will be placed on the nearest neighbouring grave

- 24.6.2. The excavated soil will be in situ from the date of excavation until the completion of the interment, this time frame is kept as short as possible
- 24.6.3. Grave space reservation and interments are also managed to ensure no one area received excessive damage from excavation machinery, or that excavated soil is placed on a recently buried grave.
- 24.6.4. Any damage will be repaired but may be restricted by seasonal conditions
- 24.6.5. Removing headstones to gain access to reserved plots
 - 24.6.5.1. To gain access to certain reserved grave spaces, it may be required to remove headstones
 - 24.6.5.2. Notice will be issued to the EROB owner listed on the grant
 - 24.6.5.3. An EROB owner cannot refuse the removal
 - 24.6.5.4. The Town Council will cover the costs of any removal and offer to have the memorial cleaned.
- 24.6.6. Removing the headstone for the second interment into a double-depth grave
 - 24.6.6.1. It is the responsibility of the funeral manager to arrange the removal of an existing headstone prior to the second interment into a double depth grave.
 - 24.6.6.2. This must be done prior to issuing Witney Town council with interment forms
- 24.7.** Holiday items clearance
 - 24.7.1. Periodically throughout the year more thorough item clearance will be carried out, typically these are 1 month following Christmas, Easter and Mother's Day and Father's Day.
- 24.8.** Tree works
 - 24.8.1. Any damage caused to a memorial by falling tree limbs is classed as an act of God and the town council accepts no liability.

25. Stone Masons

- 25.1.1. Stone masons working in Witney Town Council cemeteries must be registered with the Town Council, and the following documentation must be provided yearly**
 - 25.1.1.1. Public Liability insurance of £5million**
 - 25.1.1.2. Risk assessment for working in a burial ground covering all activities**
- 25.1.2. Stone Mason must be registered with the NAMM registration scheme RQMF (register of qualified memorial fixers) and follow the NAMM code of working practice**

26. Memorials

- 26.1.** Process
 - 26.1.1. The EROB must be purchased to install a memorial at both cemeteries and rights granted by the EROB owner.
 - 26.1.1.1. For memorials spanning two plots, the EROB must be owned for both plots
 - 26.1.2. Full details on measurement for memorials can be found in the separate Memorial Sizes Document.
 - 26.1.3. Memorials can be installed on all lawned plots 12 months after the date of interment. This leaves time for the ground to recompact and grass seed to germinate and grow.
 - 26.1.4. During this 12-month period, a small plaque or wooden cross can be staked in the ground to identify the plot.

- 26.1.5. This will be removed on the date of grass seeding and stored in the relevant cemetery depot
 - 26.1.5.1. The wooden crosses must be no bigger than 10cm wide and 25cm high
- 26.1.6. Before the installation of any memorial, a completed memorial application form must be submitted for approval.
 - 26.1.6.1. Only once a 12-month period has passed and approval has been granted can a memorial be installed.
 - 26.1.6.2. The submitted approved memorial application form will be checked against the physical memorial before installation at the relevant cemetery by a cemetery operative.
 - 26.1.6.2.1. If any details of the memorial do not match that of the approved document, installation may be refused.
 - 26.1.6.3. Any memorial found to be installed without approval will be removed and the cost recovered from the person who ordered the tombstone.
- 26.2. Approval**
 - 26.2.1. Memorials with the exception of wooden crosses must be manufactured from stone.
 - 26.2.2. Memorials must be within the sizes listed on the memorial sizes document.
 - 26.2.3. A memorial must not cause offence, Witney Town Council will review drawing and text of all memorials and withhold the right to refuse any memorial that may cause offence. Some examples could include,
 - 26.2.3.1. Football club logos
 - 26.2.3.2. Political messages
 - 26.2.3.3. Offensive symbols
 - 26.2.4. Inscriptions should be simple, dignified and reverent
 - 26.2.5. Memorial must have the section number or letter and plot number in 15mm engraved writing on the rear of the base stone.
- 26.3. Headstones**
 - 26.3.1. All headstones in Town council cemeteries must be made up of a foundation slab, base stone, and headstone.
 - 26.3.2. The top surface of the foundation slab must be level with the ground
- 26.4. Monoliths**
 - 26.4.1. Monoliths that do not have a foundation or a shoe must be installed with at least a third of the total stone height below ground.
 - 26.4.2. Monoliths that are installed into a shoe must have a least a third of their total weight including the foundation below ground.
 - 26.4.3. The max height of a monolith is 111cm with an additional 37cm sitting below ground level.
- 26.5. Wooden Crosses**
 - 26.5.1. Wooden crosses are permitted in the cemeteries but must be constructed in a workmanlike manner.
 - 26.5.2. An application for a memorial still has to be made with a detailed picture, listing measurements of each separate piece of the cross.
 - 26.5.2.1. The following conditions must be met for approval.
 - 26.5.2.2. Within the maximum sizes of memorials
 - 26.5.2.3. An additional 1/3 of the total height is staked below ground level
 - 26.5.2.4. Manufactured from a hardwood
 - 26.5.2.5. No ornate details

- 26.5.2.6. Must have a plaque or be engraved with the name of the interred
- 26.5.2.7. Section and grave number on the reverse
- 26.5.3. Wooden crosses will be inspected on a yearly basis for their condition.
 - 26.5.3.1. If a wooden cross has deteriorated contact will be made with the EROB owner for its restoration or removal.
 - 26.5.3.2. Once a period of 6 weeks has passed from the first notification, cemetery operatives will remove the cross and store it in the cemetery depot.
- 26.6. Babies & Children's**
 - 26.6.1. Due to a smaller grave size, there are reflected smaller memorial sizes of a maximum height of 75cm.
- 26.7. Memorial Tablets**
 - 26.7.1. Memorial tablets are only permitted in the ashes path of Windrush cemetery
 - 26.7.2. These are restricted to just slopping desk tablets
 - 26.7.3. Size details can be found on the memorial sizes document.

27. Placement of items on graves and gardens

- 27.1.** Graves can only be adorned with flowers and small items made of non-hazardous unbreakable materials such as wood, ceramic, or plastic.
 - 27.1.1. All adorning items should be placed in the garden area or the area of the foundation slab of the memorial.
- 27.2.** Any other items will be removed by Town Council staff and stored safely in the cemetery depot for collection if requested.
 - 27.2.1. This will be done without notification and Witney Town Council takes no responsibility for damaged or lost items.
- 27.3.** The following items are not permitted, this is not an exhaustive list but contains items that have been commonly found in the cemeteries.
 - 27.3.1. Glass objects including items containing glass such as candle holders and photo frames
 - 27.3.2. Any shrubs or trees
 - 27.3.2.1. These will be removed at the earliest convenience without notification and stored for collection if requested.
 - 27.3.3. Electrical items such as solar lights
 - 27.3.4. Balloons and large flower displays
 - 27.3.4.1. On the date of internment, these may be left and will be cleared away by the Town Council 7 days following the internment if not done so already.
 - 27.3.5. Any form of fencing/kerbing signifying the burial area
 - 27.3.6. Large items such as statues
- 27.4.** Witney Town Council will communicate with EROB where large items have to be removed from graves.
 - 27.4.1. The notification will first give the chance for the EROB owner to remove the items.
 - 27.4.2. Once a period of 6 weeks has passed from the first notification, cemetery operatives will remove the items and store them in the cemetery depot.
- 27.5. Garden area**
 - 27.5.1. All lawned graves have a designated garden area in which the EROB grant owner can plant and also place items.
 - 27.5.2. The permitted garden area is the width of the foundation slab and has a depth of 45cm starting at the base of the foundation slab.

- 27.5.3. If the EROB owner doesn't wish to install a memorial and only wishes for a garden area the area can encompass the location of the headstone increasing, it to a 90cm square.
- 27.5.3.1. The EROB must still be purchased for a garden area.
- 27.5.4. No form of fencing/kerbing can be installed marking the area of the garden.
- 27.5.5. Shrubs and tree are not allowed to be planted

28. Vaults

- 28.1. The construction and reopening of vaults will be managed by Witney Town Council**
- 28.2. Applications can be made to construct brick or concrete block vaults and concrete chambers or vault liners in both Tower Hill and Windrush Cemeteries.**
 - 28.2.1. Applications will be assessed against multiple criteria and may be rejected if the installation of a vault is not possible. Contributing factor that could affect an application are listed below.**
 - 28.2.1.1. Ground conditions**
 - 28.2.1.2. Plot size available in a burial area**
 - 28.2.1.3. Neighbouring oversized plots**
 - 28.2.1.4. Achievable excavation depth**
 - 28.2.2. Vault should be installed simultaneously with grave reservations**
 - 28.2.2.1. The time frame for an interment requesting a vault at the same time will be at the discretion of Witney Town Council**
- 28.3. Reopening of vaults**
 - 28.3.1. Notice from the burial manager to reopen an existing vault must be issued to Witney Town Council prior to any interment booking being made.**
 - 28.3.1.1. This is so Witney Town Council staff can open and inspect the condition of a vault and measure the vault for maximum coffin size.**

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS



Agenda Item:	Closed Churchyard update
Meeting Date:	17 th of March 2025
Contact Officer:	Operations Manager – Angus Whitburn

Background

Under the closed churchyard act the council manages the churchyards of Holy Trinity and St Marys churches. In July 2021 the council approved the rewilding of the churchyards for both Holy Trinity and ST'Marys.

Current Situation

Holy Trinity

The rewilding of Holy Trinity Church Yard has been a massive success. Just threw the basic process of cutting and collecting the grass in early autumn and late spring the churchyard has flourished. This has been massively attributed to the ground upon which Holy Trinity is situated, which is highly likely to be ancient woodland.

St Marys

In comparison St Mary's has struggled, the ground again is the massive contributing factor and St Mary's likely sits on made-up ground which is supported by recent historical information. This means to achieve a true rewilding of the churchyard an engineered approach would have to be attempted. This would involve stripping the turf layer or killing off the grass and then seeding with wildflower mixes. The Church are keen to just leave the ground to grow which will leave long unkempt grass.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Biodiversity – The rewilding of the church yards will increase biodiversity
- b) Environment & Climate Emergency – The church's goals of achieving eco church credentials are linked to the rewilding programmes

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

St Mary's Churchyard is a central point in Witney and on the main walking route from the town centre to the Leys recreation ground. The rewilding over the past years has looked unsightly and caused complaints for the council to handle. The church has tried to placate this with signage but the appearance of the churchyard can't be overlooked.

St Mary's church is keen to continue with the rewilding programme despite the bad appearance. If the council were to cancel the programme at St Mary's this may damage the relationship with the church.

Financial implications

- To rewilding of St Mary's churchyard there would be a substantial financial and also labour cost to the council.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Decide if to continue with the rewilding of St Mary's Church yard.

Friends of The Cemeteries Meeting

05/03/2025

Cemetery Regulations

The Operations Manager gave a brief verbal update on his review of the Cemetery Regulations. He noted that the main changes were:

1. WTC would now build vaults if they were requested.
2. Ashes can now be scattered into a plot at The Windrush cemetery before it has been fully buried. This will involve peeling back the turf, scattering the ashes – not burying an urn, and replacing the turf and soil immediately.
3. Rewording to clarify points to avoid misinterpretation.

He further explained that the document would be presented to the HCA Committee on 17 March for adoption. FoTC welcomed the review and raised no concerns.

Hug In a Book

The Cemeteries Administrator asked FoTC for any feedback on the Cemetery Guide. FoTC reported that it was exactly what they had in mind when WTC were tasked with creating a guide for cemetery users. FoTC thanked the Cemeteries Administrator for her work.

Ashes Scattering Bed Planting (Tower Hill)

The Cemeteries Administrator gave a verbal update on the refurbishment of the scattering bed as the plants had come to the end of their life.

She had designed a new garden which would be more user friendly. The new garden has been stripped in readiness for the new planting scheme which will contain plants that reflect a variety of woodland space including Ferns, Foxgloves, Lily of the Valley and more.

The planting will be broken up with patches of stones. This will allow families to find a space to scatter their ashes without disturbing the plants. FoTC was presented with a boarder design and pictures of the plants. FoTC approved of the plants and colour scheme. FoTC also praised the Operations Manager and the works team for their hard work maintaining the cemetery and on how beautiful the cemetery was looking.

Dog Fouling (Tower Hill)

Following sporadic reports of dog fouling on the graves and around Tower Hill Cemetery. Operations Manager reported that we have now installed better signage throughout the cemetery. There have been less reports into the office regarding dog fouling, but WTC will continue to monitor this. FoTC addressed the group on other antisocial matters that had been reported to them such as bike riding, children 'hanging out' and drug taking.

FoTC were advised that when these reports come into the office we try to encourage people to report to 101. This puts the cemetery on the police radar for patrols. If the police are unaware, they won't increase patrols in the area. FoTC agreed they would encourage others to report in this way.

Memorial Monolith (Windrush)

The Operations Manager updated FoTC on the new monolith to be installed replacing the existing Tree Guard and hold memorial plaques.

It was explained that the new memorial would resolve the access issues caused by the tree guards siting in the woodland area therefore addressing anyone with mobility issues as the memorial will be installed next to the path.

It was confirmed that WTC will offer to move the Tree Guard plaques to the Monolith at no cost to families who wish to relocate. Any families who wish to keep their plaques on the Tree Guard are welcome to. No new plaques will be installed on the Tree Guard.

Wildflower Planting (Windrush)

The wildflower planting on the meadow is underway. The team have laid a large sheet of plastic to kill of the grass and hardy weeds to try and create an area that can be planted. FoTC were in approval and thanked the team for their hard work.

Muslim Burials (Windrush)

The Operations Manager advised that following a meeting with members of the Muslim community he had explained WTC's process and timescales for burials. This being approx. 3 days or less and not the 3 weeks as falsely reported to them.

It was agreed that any burial requirements will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and that WTC would take steps to assist as much as possible as they do with any burial. FoTC was very pleased to receive the update.

2025 Admin Changes

The Cemeteries Administrator presented FoTC with copies of the newly designed cemetery forms and explained that this should lead to better collection of information. The new forms were simpler, and the information collected was specific to its purpose and now contained a privacy statement and a tick box to consent to relevant information being passed to a third party if applicable, therefore meeting GDPR regulations.

FoTC were impressed with the forms redesign and agreed that they were much clearer

The Senior Admin Officer reported that WTC would also be taking a stricter approach to the acceptance of documents submission which would bring about a smoother running of both the interment and memorial installation processes.

FoTC received a copy of the 2025/26 cemetery fees as agreed by Council. They raised no concerns of the increases.

Closed Cemeteries Maintenance Update

Operations Manager reported the following works had been carried out:

- Repairs at Holy Trinity archway were currently underway.
- The lights at St Marys Church were now fully operational and the issues with timing of these that had been reported by the residents of the Almshouses resolved.
- That discussions were underway regarding the wildflower area at the rear of St Mary's churchyard.

FoTC thanked Operations Manager for repairing the lights as residents had raised how dark it had been without them. They offered their thoughts on the grass cutting regime of the

churchyard and how it had been reported as looking unkempt and neglected. They asked that the area be maintained with a prestige cut and that their comments be included in the discussions with the church.

Memorial Testing

The Operations Manager advised that he and the works team are now fully qualified to carry out the necessary testing. It was agreed that when previously carried out by an external contractor it was done in such a way to cause stress to families and negative press coverage.

It was agreed that future testing would be far less intrusive and could be carried out with limited communications in order to reduce the risk of bad social media or press coverage. FoTC were in favour of this approach.

Invitation to Funeral Directors to attend future meetings

It was agreed that FoTC would invite representatives from local Funeral Directors to attend future FoTC meetings as their feedback could be invaluable to progressing improvements in the Cemeteries. WTC would continue to provide support and encourage feedback also however it was felt this approach may be more productive.

Feedback from FoTC

FoTC updated the meeting on feedback they had received regarding plots. FoTC passed on that some families had noticed there was no consistency with the plot garden policy. Some families had been asked to remove items where other families had not. The example given was a plot that had its entire boarder marked with stones. The Operations Manager spoke on this subject to update that he and the Cemeteries Administrator had started assessing both cemeteries more regularly and will continue this work to bring both cemeteries in line with our policies. Operations Manager agreed that some older plots were not in line with the garden policy, and he was working to address this, so it was fair for all families.

FoTC asked the group what progress had been made with the children's memorial garden. The Operations Manager reported that due to ground conditions, climbing plants had failed to grow around the arch way that had been installed. FoTC asked that the archway be removed, and that the area be kept tidy and accessible. The Operations Manager advised that the 'Pebble Pond' was complete, and a bench installed. The Cemeteries Administrator will confirm a company that could supply and engrave stones to remember a child. WTC will then issues comms on the garden to raise awareness to users and residents.

Lastly, it was requested that the soft close mechanism be placed on the pedestrian gate at Tower Hill to ensure that it does not remain open when not in use. (HCA 13.03.2023 H139 Refers)

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Allotment Provision

Meeting Date: Monday, 17 March 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to inform Members on the Council's duty to provide a sufficient number of allotments for residents and to decide if any action should be taken to increase this number following an enquiry from a resident in 2024.

Background

There is no fixed definition of an allotment or legal minimum size but on average they are 300 sq. yards or 250m. The technical definition is a piece of land allocated or allotted to a person as the result of an enclosure award. Town Council allotments are regulated under the Allotments Acts 1908–50.

If the Council believes there is a demand for allotments, it has a statutory duty to provide a sufficient number of plots under section 23 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908. This is a duty to *consider* providing allotments and does not mean it must.

For reference, Section 25 of this Act refers to powers of compulsory acquisition for this purpose, Section 27 provides for letting to a co-operative, and Section 30 adds that if a tenant lives more than one mile outside the area for which the allotments are provided; the local authority can serve notice.

Current Situation

The Town Council provides allotments across four sites in Witney at Newland, Hailey Road, Lakeside, and Windrush Place which are administered by the Witney Allotment Association.

Information from the Allotment Association website indicates there at least 233 people on the waiting list for allotments in Witney. It has not been established how up to date this information is.

There is no minimum number of allotments the Council should provide but research shows that the 1969 Thorpe Report is often quoted, which recommends a minimum provision equivalent to 15 per 1,000 households, but this is not binding.

A survey undertaken by Government in 2006 showed the national average was 13 plots per 1,000 households, and it is understood the National Society for Allotment & Leisure Gardeners suggests a minimum of 20 per 1,000 households (300 sq. yards).

The number of allotments currently available in Witney is 230, which include a mixture of 300 sq. yard plots and smaller. There are currently approximately 14,000 households in Witney. Based on the figures above this would mean the following for provision:

13 allotments per 1,000 households	182	230	+159
15 allotments per 1,000 households	210	230	+20*
20 allotments per 1,000 households	280	230	-50

*This figure could be interpreted as less, depending on the size of the plots.

Further allotments sites are expected at East Witney (in Witney parish) and at North Witney (outside of Witney Parish) in the coming years but there is no time frame for these developments. If on the same scale as Windrush Place, the developments could provide a further 100+ allotment sites.

It should also be noted that a number of allotments at Lakeside continue to be subject to flooding during extreme weather events. Any mitigation measures which reduced this number would clearly lower the number of available plots.

The cost of providing further new allotments may be prohibitive or appropriate land may not be available, easily let or purchased in or outside the Witney boundary. In the first instance, it may be prudent to request if the WAA can ascertain if the current waiting list is correct.

By considering this report, the Council is in effect carrying out its duty to *consider* providing more allotment sites if it considers there is an insufficient number.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council’s Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Allotments can provide access to healthy food for low-income and vulnerable groups, especially if designed with disability inclusiveness in mind.
- b) Biodiversity – Allotments can Increase green space for wildlife, create habitats for Pollinators and improve soil quality.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no impact.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Allotments can offer a reduction in food miles and in energy use through the promotion of sustainable practices.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

By pre-emptively considering this issue, the Council is mitigating the risk for challenge to perform its duty to consider providing more allotment sites.

The Council may face reputational risk; taking into account the interests of the local community as a whole, if the provision of further allotments on unreasonable terms would not be the best use of the council's resources. However, the reverse is also true for those who believe the current number of plots is not sufficient.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

By supporting community gardens and allotments, parish and town councils can help residents access affordable, nutritious food, promote community engagement and social cohesion, and contribute to the overall health and well-being of their communities.

Allotments can and do improve the wellbeing of communities, and close inspection of community strategies reveals many opportunities for the achievement of strategic priorities through allotment gardening, and in ways that engage with communities at a very local level. Allotments provide a source of fresh food, healthy outdoor exercise and social interaction, and can benefit all groups in society. By providing a link to nature, allotment gardening addresses all three aspects of wellbeing – social, economic and environmental.

Financial implications

- There are no direct financial implications pertaining to this report however, the cost of seeking new land for allotments is likely to be high.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

- Consider whether the current allotment provision and strategy of requesting Section 106 funding from developments to provide further plots is sufficient or not. If not,
- Consider how best the Council could move forward with obtaining further land for allotments in or around Witney.
- Ask the Witney Allotment Association if they could conduct an audit of the current waiting list, if not already underway.